



COUNTERINSURGENCY, DEMOCRACY, AND THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY IN INDIA

From warfare to welfare?

Mona Bhan

ROUTLEDGE

Counterinsurgency, Democracy, and the Politics of Identity in India

The rhetoric of armed social welfare has become prominent in military and counterinsurgency circuits with profound consequences for the meanings of democracy, citizenship, and humanitarianism in conflict zones. By focusing on the border district of Kargil, the site of India and Pakistan's fourth war in 1999, the book analyses how humanitarian policies of healing and heart warfare infused the logic of democracy and militarism in the post-war period.

Compassion became a strategy to contain political dissension, regulate citizenship, and normalize the extensive militarization of Kargil's social and political order. The book uses the power of ethnography to foreground people's complex subjectivities and the violence of compassion, healing, and sacrifice in India's disputed frontier state. Based on extensive research in several sites across the region, from border villages in Kargil to military bases and state offices in Ladakh and Kashmir, this engaging book presents new material on military–civil relations, the securitization of democracy and development, and the extensive militarization of everyday life and politics. It is of interests to scholars working in diverse fields including political anthropology, development, and Asian Studies.

Mona Bhan is Associate Professor of Anthropology at DePauw University, USA. Her research interests include counterinsurgency, militarization, democracy, gender, and environmentalism. Her on-going research is on the politics of water between India and Pakistan.

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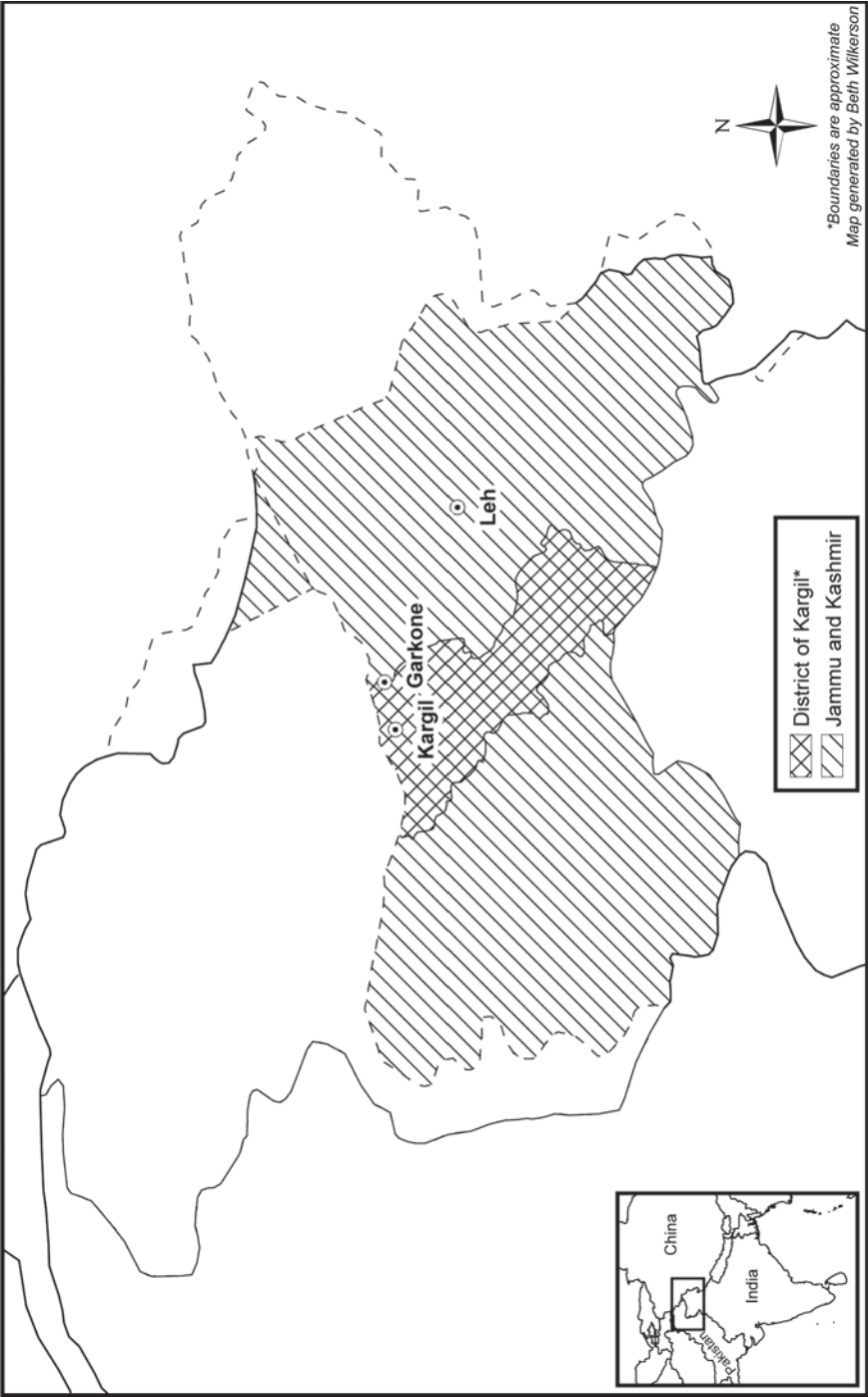
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Introduction

As the tenth anniversary of the Kargil war approached, the Indian army enthusiastically planned a commemorative event, the first of its kind, in the town of Drass, one of the many sites in the border district of Kargil, which had been the scene of intense fighting between Indian and Pakistani forces in 1999. Since many soldiers had lost their lives in “the line of duty,” fighting what was widely characterized as one of India’s “most difficult wars,” an important part of the commemorative ceremony was to invite the families of martyred soldiers to Drass. By 2009, however, there were hardly any traces of violence or blood visible in Drass. Most high-altitude war sites had been repackaged as tourist destinations through the government’s “healing touch” policy. The most popular among them was the war memorial that spread over vast swathes of locally owned land and stood testimony to the 537 Indian soldiers who had died fighting India’s fourth war with Pakistan. Not too far from this scene of somber celebration was a war gallery in which the military proudly displayed all its war exploits: captured war items from the enemy that included torches, helmets, mine cases, gloves, and remnants of weapons, bombs, and shells.

The Kargil war was not just a battle over territory but was also an opportunity to win people’s “hearts and minds” in the disputed state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), a refrain I had repeatedly heard from many army officers since the beginning of my fieldwork in 1999. Pakistanis could not have entered Indian territory without local support, I was told, and the last ten years had been crucial in fostering closer ties with civilian populations in Kargil. To showcase the military’s success in aligning border communities with sentiments of national pride and victory, young men and children from nearby villages were asked to perform their traditional dance and song routines at the commemoration. Archery and horse-polo matches were organized and teams from the Indian military and surrounding villages played friendly matches celebrating the newly forged bond between locals and the Indian army. Indeed, the tenth anniversary was an ideal avenue to portray the Indian army’s victories—not only its continued control over Kargil’s strategic peaks and mountains but also its emerging relations of trust, healing, and camaraderie with local populations.

In Garkone, however, another border village around 100 kilometers north of Drass, a small ethnic minority community of Brogpas marked the anniversary

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quite differently. Despite India's victory, peace and harmony had not returned to their villages. The villagers felt that the war had driven out their *lhas* and *lhus* (local gods and deities) from their high-mountain abodes. The heavy artillery fire and bloodshed on the mountains had scared as well as angered them and they refused to return. The absence of their deities had upset the social and ecological order, leading to extreme scarcity of water, unprecedented weather, and accidental deaths in the village. In order for peace to prevail, Brogpas claimed, the *lhas* and *lhus* had to return to their mountain abodes.

Therefore, close to the tenth anniversary of the Kargil war, as the Indian military basked in the glory of victory, Brogpas organized a trip to the Bararu *nulluh*—a high-land pasture where many of their gods and deities had lived prior to the war (Figure 0.1). Each household was obligated to send a member on this 10-kilometer hike in order to persuade their deities to return. No one had visited Bararu since it became part of the border between India and Pakistan in 1999. Bararu, unlike other highland pastures, did not have a permanent military post. However, unexploded shells and dangerous landmines forced many Brogpas to stay away from the *nullah*. Previously, large herds of sheep accompanied by *pajlus* (herdsmen) had stayed in Bararu for months at a time and brought back delicacies such as *phlem* and *gan* (butter and yoghurt), products made from goat milk that figured prominently in village festivities. Villagers would often trek to Bararu to worship their gods and deities.



Figure 0.1 Villagers in Bararu. Source: Author, 2009

No such trek had been organized in the past decade and this was one reason why the Brogpa *lhas* and *lhus* were angry. Rather than talk about the war through narratives of victory or failure, the war had, Brogpas repeatedly claimed, “brought the border closer,” a common refrain used to encapsulate their irreversibly transformed relations with their high-mountain pasturelands and with their sacred spaces, gods and deities. Although the war and its socio-economic implications saturated everyday conversations during my summer trips to the village from 1999, it was not until 2003, four years after the war had officially ended, that I understood the full force of this refrain.

It started out as a routine September day. The sun was bright, rising from behind the seemingly interminable stretch of mountains that surround the village of Garkone. The heat of the morning sun would soon become relentless and berating as the day progressed. Brogpa men and women were hurriedly leaving for their *nullahs* in the early hours of the morning to gather fodder for their goats and *dzos*¹ and fuelwood for the prolonged spell of winter that was fast approaching. I too left early to visit Samphel dudo at the far end of the village with Nilza, my research assistant. Previously from an affluent family, Samphel dudo barely owned any land now. Most of his land had either been usurped by his brothers or was occupied by the military. His current employment was as a day laborer for the General Reserve Engineering Force (GREF). As soon as Samphel dudo and I settled down to sip our *gur gur chai* (salt and butter tea), we heard a terrifyingly loud sound. While Garkone had witnessed frequent mortar shelling in 1999, there had been relative calm since then. I hoped that it was a routine “blasting” exercise carried out by GREF to construct a tarmac road in order to ease the movement of military traffic. Dudo anxiously looked out from his window toward the direction of the sound when we heard another volley of artillery fire in the air. Dudo and Nilza both confirmed that the Indian army was firing shells from large Bofors field howitzers—Swedish guns that had allegedly helped the Indian army win the war four years ago. I was constantly amazed at the ease with which the villagers distinguished sounds of Indian artillery fire from those of the Pakistan army, a skill that helped them decide whether to stay inside their houses or seek refuge in makeshift bunkers.

Nilza and I sprinted towards the other end of the village to see whether the guns had been reinstalled as Samphel dudo had speculated. Having averted a nuclear confrontation in 2002, the possibilities of yet another skirmish between India and Pakistan could not be ignored. When the guns were reinstalled in the neighboring village of Dha, Khyentse, the *ex-nambardar* (headman) cautioned us against an impending response from Pakistan. Although Pakistan did not respond with gunfire that day, shrill sounds and a kaleidoscopic display of lights from the Indian side continued into the night.

For the next three days, there was relative quiet. I finally decided to revisit Samphel dudo to finish the census survey of his household when I spotted Norboo, one of my other neighbors, carrying a case of beer and a bag of vegetables and goat meat. Norboo had recently married and he was throwing a party later in the day. He invited me to join him for a small *gron* (feast) at his house. As the fear

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of shelling from across the border still loomed heavily on my mind, I welcomed the idea of a *gron* and its interactions as an affirmation of “normalcy” despite the intermittent disquiet that was interrupting the quotidian routine of the village.

The *gron* was small. Norboo had invited Sonam Dorje, the village Surpunch, and Nawang, one of the schoolteachers, his closest friends in the village. After a few glasses of *chang* (locally brewed beer) and military rum that became available to the villagers in the post-war period, the conversation quickly shifted from Norboo’s newly acquired culinary skills to the controversy regarding the Councillor’s seat in the recently formed Hill Council in Kargil. The war of 1999 had forced the relatively unknown district of Kargil to the center of regional and national consciousness. Other than distributing food and blankets, funding bomb shelters, and allocating money for reconstructions and repairs, the government headed by Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, the chief minister of J&K, wanted Kargilis to become active “stakeholders” in the long-term peace, stability, and development of the region. To achieve this objective, Mufti convinced Kargilis to form an autonomous hill-development Council, which was his attempt to strengthen democracy by decentralizing political power and ensuring local participation in the region’s development planning and policy. Such concessions were considered critical to integrate Kargilis fully into the national mainstream.²

For Brogpas, the effects of the Kargil war were complex. The war had violated their deities and sacred spaces and made it impossible for them to access many of their pasturelands. The borders were now closer because “new extended technologies of destruction and damage” had “reduced the distance between homefront and frontline, folding the two into one another” (Anderson 2010: 169). Yet despite the constant fear of cross-border shelling, the war had also ensured their closer proximity and engagement with institutions of state-making and development, providing an opportunity to participate in matters of governance as active stakeholders rather than as passive beneficiaries. The conversation at the *gron* was informed by these larger issues. Electoral politics had failed to be truly representative for Brogpas, a miniscule ethnic minority of 3,000 who lived in several villages on the disputed border between India and Pakistan, and, therefore, the Hill Council was important. It was perhaps their only opportunity to exert their agency in the formal political sphere and decision-making processes of the state. However, the decision of who to nominate for the Council was contentious and deeply fractured Brogpas along village, familial, and party lines. The concern was palpable at the party. After much discussion, Norboo and others agreed that a consensual Brogpa candidate was urgently needed to circumvent their deep political schisms and prevent them from losing the nomination altogether.

While I followed their animated conversations with keen interest, it was hard to ignore the roaring sounds of shells that intermittently rocked the village. Students giggled to see me cringe with fear. Norbu, Nawang and Tsewang, local teachers in the school, recounted horrific stories from the war, dismissing my despair as an exaggerated reaction by an outsider. Their nonchalance eased my concerns only briefly. Pakistani shelling started precisely three days after we had first anticipated it. I ran to seek refuge in Khyentse’s *boo* (donkey shed) that

felt more secure than the concrete and asbestos of my rented accommodation. Even though the construction of safety bunkers was an urgent government priority in the post-war period, most Brogpas continued to use makeshift bunkers—*boos* or huge boulders—for refuge, mostly because the fair allotment of money was a recurring issue and the project had nearly been abandoned.

Several villagers had gathered inside Khyentse's *boo*. Everybody wondered how and why Garkone was being targeted yet again. Sensing my fear, Yuntan, a young Brogpa recruit turned to me and said, "There is nothing to be scared about. These shells are constant reminders that Indians and Pakistanis send each other to announce that, guys, we are here on the border, so remain within your limits." I wondered if Yuntan was right. Could it be dismissed as a "routine skirmish, often the result of extreme boredom that soldiers experienced defending the disputed Line of Control (LoC)," as I was repeatedly told, or did it announce yet another full-fledged war? Despite the disquiet of a few hours, Khyentse and others resumed their everyday activities soon after the shelling stopped without seemingly sharing my fear or anxiety about an impending war. Too embarrassed to express my concerns even as Indian and Pakistani troops continued their violent theatrics on the border, I soon learned to tamp down my fears. "Terror's power, its matter-of-factness, is exactly about doubting one's perception of reality," Linda Green argues (1994: 231). Despite my fears, I, too, referred to the war as a thing of the past, unwittingly corroborating with hegemonic narratives of India's unequivocal victory in 1999 and slowly learning to cope with what for most villagers were routine, insignificant skirmishes.

Yet I could hardly ignore the paradoxes of living in a war-torn space: people mourned the loss of their deities or the defilement of their sacred landscapes even as they attributed their newfound political visibility to border wars and violence. The war had made them important, Brogpas claimed. "You would hardly see a state or a military officer visiting Brogpa villages; now everyone is visiting us, with blankets, with bunker money, and with a ton of other benefits."

State benevolence was not limited to the distribution of bunkers and blankets alone. Although cross-border skirmishes continued long after the war was over, India and Pakistan finally declared a ceasefire in 2003, immediately halting the regular exchange of mortar fire across the border.³ India had deeply invested, however, not only in defending its borders militarily, but also in devising non-violent and humanitarian strategies to exert control over its troubled frontiers and secure the loyalties of its border populations, an enduring concern of the Indian government since its first war with Pakistan in 1948 (see Aggarwal 2004: 38, 39). In 2002, however, the J&K state adopted a comprehensive strategy of governance, officially referred to as the "healing touch" policy, which relied on the language of *insaniyat* (humanism) and compassion to heal a body politic ravaged by decades of cross-border strife between India and Pakistan.⁴ The J&K government proclaimed that healing "moral and historical wounds" was urgently required to promote a culture of goodwill and reconciliation in the region and rebuild a distraught civil society.⁵ Especially in the border district of Kargil where communities had witnessed several cross-border wars and suffered years of

discrimination at the hands of previous J&K governments, the healing touch policy promised good governance, democracy, and development.⁶ The post-war period also witnessed the Indian military's investments in tropes of healing and heart warfare⁷ through its large-scale development intervention called Operation Sadhbhavna or Goodwill. Allegedly, "political-legal" or "logical" solutions had been insufficient to instill in border populations nationalist feelings and sentiments or address their deep-seated alienation against the government; "combating alienation," the military surmised, "was a matter of the heart" (Cariappa et al. 2008: 749). The Kargil war was thus what Veena Das (1995) would call a "critical event," an event that mobilized India's hypermilitarized apparatus but also enabled the state and the military to appropriate the rhetoric of healing and compassion to manage India's disputed frontiers.

Heart warfare, healing, and humanitarianism

In this book, I argue that tropes of heart warfare, healing, and compassion and their deployment by states are crucial to the emerging yet pervasive strategy of governance in war-torn regions where states are heavily invested in rebuilding their authority and legitimacy. Since "the power to heal is the existential antithesis to the power to kill," healing signifies a substantial shift in the logic of governmentality, where humanitarian discourses of development and compassion, rather than force or violence, are foregrounded as critical modalities of governance and state-making (Smith-Nonini 2010: 75). If, through violence, the state becomes viable, and through maps, censuses, and statistics, it is rendered "legible" (Scott 1998), then through tropes of healing and recovery the state becomes soulful, at (tending) to the needs of marginal populations that are "hurt" and "alienated" due to discriminatory state policies and vicious forms of cross-border violence. The "healing touch policy" acknowledged that partisan government policies had ignored the development and prosperity of border regions in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), a neglect that could worsen the crisis of loyalty in India's disputed state. It was therefore imperative that borders be "*heal[ed]* before a massive collapse destabilized the entire country" (emphasis mine).⁸ No longer just a *rational* pursuit focused on the "business of rule" then (Poggi 1978, cited in Berezin 2001: 86), state-making in post-war Kargil became a *sentimental* undertaking, claiming citizens' loyalties and establishing its legitimacy through tropes of healing and heart warfare.

Since 1947, the state of J&K has been at the center of a prolonged dispute between the two neighboring nation-states, India and Pakistan. The three inconclusive wars between India and Pakistan did little to resolve the political crisis of sovereignty over Kashmiri territory. On the contrary, the wars ensured that people's desires and aspirations to determine their political destinies fell by the wayside and Kashmir was reduced to a "struggle" over precious territory between two warring nations (Schofield 2003: xv). In 1989, the scenario changed dramatically when several groups of armed Kashmiri Muslims started a popular and violent uprising demanding Kashmir's *aazadi* or independence from the

Indian state. The armed movement for *aazadi* was countered with extreme forms of military brutality and repression. Many recent studies on Kashmir have foregrounded the abusive apparatus of the Indian state and its counterinsurgency war that continues to wreak havoc on Kashmiris through its tactics of fear, intimidation, and violence (Duschinski 2009; Kazi 2010; Kaul 2011; Mathur 2012). India's prolonged war against its citizens in Kashmir has created what Adir Ophir calls a "catastrophic" state, a state that is remarkably "indifferen[t] to the fate of the living" and continually reinforces the violent logics of its rule through regimes of rape, torture, and extrajudicial killings (2007: 136). Rather than caring for its populations or protecting them, the "catastrophic" state, Ophir claims, works toward their complete destruction or annihilation.

In Kargil, where there is no armed movement against the Indian state, the routinized brutality of an active counterinsurgency war is absent. The catastrophic state, however, manifests itself not through indiscriminate killings but through violent spectacles of cross-border warfare or through "intermittent skirmishes" in which enemy states exchange fire and mortar across disputed national boundaries. It also asserts itself more routinely through the state's massive investments in defense and war-preparedness initiatives that solidify Kargil's place as a theater of cross-border combat and warfare. Given Kargil's location on India's disputed borders, the existence of a "catastrophic" state that can "suspend" or "ignore" its concern for the "fate of the living" in the name of defense and national security is hardly surprising. In her insightful ethnography on Ladakh, Ravina Aggarwal has argued that it is on the borders that "the state expresses itself through a habitualized performativity" where it "repeatedly asserts [its] physical and symbolic authority over its citizens" (2004: 17) through exaggerated performances of violence, warfare, and securitization.⁹ "Borderlands are an explicitly spatial example of the state of exception," Jones (2009: 894) contends, places where the logics of violence exist outside the law and where the state is constantly perfecting its strategies of control and domination.¹⁰

My focus, however, is not on the state's performance of authority through military spectacle and symbolic displays of power. Instead, I explore how the tropes of healing and heart warfare became tools to normalize state-centric visions of territory, sovereignty, and democracy in post-war Kargil. After the Kargil war, the central government, headed by the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), solidified what was broadly categorized as a "humanitarian" approach to the Kashmir crisis, one in which Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's famous formulation that Kashmir was fundamentally a "human" problem and should be resolved within the framework of humanity (*insaniyat ke dayre mein*), considerably restructured Delhi's relationship with Kashmir.¹¹ Energized by its pursuit of humanism, the ruling BJP government adopted a more "conciliatory" approach towards Kashmir despite remaining committed to the ideologies of "communalization and militarization" (International Crisis Group 2003: 10, 12). Prime Minister Vajpayee's "hand of friendship" complemented Mufti Sayeed's "healing touch" to constitute a government ostensibly committed to restoring "*aman*" and "*insaniyat*" (peace and humanism) in Kashmir and improving the lives of border communities in

Kargil.¹² Even before Mufti's healing touch policy, the Indian military, infamous for its *killers in khaki* image, had already adopted the "rhetoric of disarming violence" to reinvent itself as a humanitarian force in the post-war period (Aggarwal and Bhan 2009: 2).¹³

A neglected aspect of modern state formations, Adir Ophir notes, is the dual role they play as "generators and facilitators of disasters" as well as "authors" of "survival and relief operations" (2007: 121).¹⁴ As entities that claim to mobilize their "protective apparatuses" in the service of human life, modern state formations increasingly rely on the "deployment of moral sentiments" as a strategy of government (Ophir 2007: 4; Fassin 2012: 1).¹⁵ The "vocabulary of suffering, compassion, assistance, and responsibility to protect [have become an integral] part of our political life" in the past few decades, giving rise to what many scholars call the "new humanitarian world order" (Fassin 2012: 2, 189). In order to understand the emergence of the "humanitarian moment in contemporary history" and recognize its multiple forms, it is critical to trace the logic of compassion across multiple scales and locations (Douzinas 2007; Muehlebach 2011; Fassin 2012: 13).¹⁶ An explicit focus on humans is as much part of the politics of global humanitarian interventions as it is at the center of national or local policies that claim to put an end to sociopolitical suffering or "heal wounded hearts."

We must therefore pay close attention to how sovereignty in Kashmir, or more specifically in post-war Kargil, was not only constituted through *exceptional* forms of violence but also through the state's *extraordinary* claims to repair, relieve, and heal an ailing body politic (Ophir 2007: 117, emphasis mine). A greater emphasis on the state and the military's benevolent powers in Kashmir was the outcome of a popular perception that while violence could curb Kashmir's armed insurgency, "forces of compassion" (Bornstein and Redfield 2011) and development were required to cultivate "appropriate sentiments and dispositions" toward Indian rule (Stoler 2004: 5), especially among border populations whose vulnerability to enemy indoctrinations remained strong. Healing therefore signaled the state's intent to transform subversive (or potentially subversive) subjects into law-abiding citizens, who would pose no future threat to India's territoriality and political integrity. In other words, the strategy of healing or heart warfare sought to correct social and political anomies through the "passion [of] compassion" (Barnett 2011: 107).¹⁷

Humanitarian discourses of healing, care, or compassion are not limited to post-war Kargil but are also deployed in Kashmir to showcase its slow yet definite recovery from the ravages of terrorism. In her fascinating work on post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), Saiba Varma argues that the pervasiveness of the humanitarian register of "psychosocial care" in Kashmir indicates a "major shift in the ways state and non-state agencies manage the Kashmir dispute, away from the language of terrorism towards one of trauma" (Varma 2011). Discourses of humanitarianism are clearly no longer the "exclusive preserve of Western saviours" (Ali 2010: 556; see also Robinson 2012).¹⁸ Even the Indian state and the military relied on similar narratives to present themselves as agents of compassion and development for populations who "inhabited the margins of the state" (Das and Poole 2004: 6), without access to the basic amenities of a civilized life.

Yet post-war assertions of moral righteousness were attempts to contain “unruly” and potentially dissident populations and stake claims to their attachments and allegiances.¹⁹

Ladakh’s “strategic geography” and “threats of civil insurgency” had shaped ideologies of development and state-making even before 1999 (Aggarwal 2004: 38, 40). Deeply-held anxieties regarding their anti-nationalist sentiments or subversive tendencies, however, surfaced most prominently in the post-war period as Kargilis were viewed as potential supporters of Pakistani-backed insurgents during the 1999 war. It was believed that Kargilis were not yet active dissidents (unlike their Kashmiri counterparts) but their loyalty to India remained amorphous or inchoate, therefore, they were “incipient” threats to the Indian polity. As a consequence, instead of relying on force or violence, the post-war period in Kargil witnessed the emergence of what Adir Ophir calls a “providential” state, which actively mobilized tropes of healing and heart warfare to “put its protective [and humanitarian] apparatus to work” (2007: 126).

Discourses of healing and heart warfare recognized “new forms of vulnerabilities and new ways of wounding”—those that were caused by continued warfare but also through years of governmental neglect and apathy (Anderson 2010: 171). Many in the government and the military believed that, if left unchecked, the simmering discontent with state policies could lead to internal strife or political subversion against the Indian state. My aim of shifting attention from the “catastrophic” to the “providential,” however, is not to claim that tropes of healing and development deployed by the military or by Mufti’s government in the post-war period lessened their capacity to inflict violence or injury. Indeed, as this book demonstrates, state- and military-mediated gestures of compassion²⁰ contributed to the “steady [expansion] of a counterinsurgency state” (Stepputat 2001: 287) in which people’s rights and access to land and resources, their bodies, livelihoods, and identities, and their conceptions of citizenship and inclusion were aligned even more firmly with the demands of a national security state.²¹ Chowdhury and Duvall (2010) rightly note: “the catastrophic potentiality of state power stems from precisely the vast expansion in state power that the providential form allows. The maximization of the life of the public increases the resources available to the state” for war-making and war-preparation, increasing “the scale and risk of conflict.”²² Healing thus becomes, in Ben Anderson’s words, a “perpetually deferred promise”: it allows states to portray populations “as target[s] to be protected” after they have devised ways to hurt, destroy, or exploit them (Anderson 2010: 164). In some ways, the vocabulary of healing and heart warfare normalizes the “brutality of realpolitik” (Fassin 2012: 2). And, yet, it “offers a high political return” by subordinating those who become targets of “healing” or “protection” to the demands of their more powerful benefactors (ibid.: 3).

The postcolonial state in Ladakh has consistently demanded loyalty in exchange for the promise of progress, inclusion, and development (Aggarwal 2004: 30, 31). In the post-war context where development and democracy were embellished with tropes of *insaniyat* and compassion, the expected “political returns” were even higher. Post-war interventions in Kargil were not just empathetic expressions

of a benevolent state. Instead, both the state's and the military's investments in "healing" and "humanitarianism" were critical instruments to enforce certain modes of consent and subjectification. Laced with the imagery of "hearts" and "compassion," discourses of healing and heart warfare produced political subjectivities that were thoroughly aligned with the imperatives of defense and security. Nosheen Ali's important work in Pakistan's border region of Gilgit-Baltistan also illustrates that the Pakistani state and the military reproduce their "structures of rule" less through explicit force and more through processes of "emotional regulation" (Ali 2008: 750, 745). Likewise, Daromir Rudnyckyj alerts us to the ways the language of "hearts" and "tears" brings about the process of subjectification insofar as "managing hearts" also entails a "process of self-management" for Muslim workers in Indonesia (2011: 63). Although developed in a different political economic context, Rudnyckyj's insights are useful for understanding the ways in which the Indian state is also vested in securing people's allegiances "via a change of heart" (Richard and Rudnyckyj 2009: 73) so potential threats to national aspirations of unity and territorial integrity are diluted and rendered socially and politically illegitimate.

In other words, instead of expanding citizens' freedoms and offering them substantive opportunities for inclusive citizenship, post-war interventions bound Kargil to the Indian nation by appealing to their loyalty and allegiance; in short, the state hailed them as citizens. The claims to "heal" and "repair" wounded hearts and souls enabled the state and the military to regulate and track not just physical bodies but also their intimate desires, allegiances, and attachments. Before I unpack how tropes of healing and heart warfare were appropriated and eventually subsumed by the demands of a national security state, I briefly situate the larger political context within which the healing touch policy was conceptualized. Why, I ask, was Kashmir—particularly Kargil—imagined as "hurt" or "wounded"?

Troubled territory, wounded citizens

Kargil is one of the two districts in the Ladakh Province of the disputed Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) with minority populations of Buddhists and Sunni Muslims, and a predominant majority of Shi'a Muslims. Leh, the other district in Ladakh, is predominantly Buddhist. Together Leh and Kargil form the province of Ladakh, the largest province in the state of Jammu and Kashmir with a total area of 96,701 square kilometers. While Kashmir exists in the Indian imaginary as a place of sublime beauty devastated by decades of Islamic terrorism, Ladakh is conceptualized either as India's "quaint" periphery or a strategic frontier bordered by Pakistan in the northwest, the Chinese province of Sinkiang in the north, and Tibet in the east (Aggarwal 2004: 9; van Beek 2004: 195). Kargil, in particular, exists in the Indian imagination as a military outpost, a place devoid of people, culture, and civilization where the Indian army battles inhospitable weather, rugged mountains, and Pakistani intruders.

Kargil, however, like the rest of Ladakh, was an important part of the Central Asian trade route until the twentieth century, often referred to as a "delightful

oasis,” where travelers and traders experienced a welcome break from the tedium of an otherwise harsh landscape (*Imperial Gazetteer of India*, 1909, cited in Sheikh 2009: 42). Unlike the past, however, when “all the roads led to Kargil” (Sheikh 2009: 39), the only road that now connects Kargil with Kashmir is the National Highway 1 (NH1), which was built predominantly to sustain the Indian military’s continued and easy access to an important and strategic border zone in the 1960s amidst rising fears that China had already built roads to connect Xinjiang with Western Tibet. NH1 crosses the formidable Zojila Pass at an altitude of 11,000 ft and remains closed to vehicular traffic from October until May. Kargilis have limited avenues for travel, work, or mobility, especially in the winter season when their district remains cut off from India due to extreme weather conditions.²³ From 1947 onwards, a spate of border wars between India and Pakistan over the status of Jammu and Kashmir militarized Kargil profoundly, contributing to Kargil’s image as a politically unstable periphery. The continued Indian and Pakistani conflict over Kashmir also limited people’s livelihoods and economic opportunities as well as their access to democracy, rights, and citizenship. Despite Kargil’s militarization because of these protracted border conflicts, parliamentary democracy, like in the rest of India, has been the political norm in the district. Every five years Kargilis elect two candidates to the Jammu and Kashmir legislative assembly and share one parliament seat with the neighboring district of Leh. Procedural democracy, however, has not allayed widespread feelings of marginalization and disenfranchisement among Kargilis who, compared to their counterparts in Leh and Kashmir, feel left behind in their pursuit of economic growth and development.

Not unlike their Buddhist neighbors in Leh who complain of “stepmotherly treatment” from the state administration in Kashmir (van Beek 1999: 435), Kargilis too resent the heavy-handedness of the Kashmiri administration in matters of governance and development. They are also equally troubled by the political machinations of Leh’s predominantly Buddhist leadership, which evokes intense distrust and antipathy among the mainly Shi’a Muslim Kargilis. These religious and regional conflicts between Buddhists and Muslims came to a head in 1989 when Ladakh was marked by intense unrest and political turmoil due to escalated communal tensions. Yet because Ladakh did not have a violent popular movement for freedom or *aazadi* from India in 1989, it was “regarded as relatively unproblematic,” unlike Kashmir (van Beek 2004: 194). Kashmir’s popular movement for *aazadi* or freedom elicited passionate responses from Indians who refused to see beyond the fetishized landscape of Kashmir and channeled all their patriotic fervor towards the Valley. Kargil hardly existed in the Indian imaginary.

This scenario changed dramatically after the war in 1999 when Kargil assumed unprecedented political, popular, and national significance. The first war to be televised in India, the Kargil war successfully mobilized aggressive Indian patriotism during a time of profound national crisis and upheaval. It furthered the process of militarization in Kargil in addition to sealing its image as India’s “ultimate” border (Aggarwal 2004: 9). In order to ensure its future preparedness to fight difficult, high-altitude wars, the Indian military upgraded the Ladakh

Scouts into an infantry regiment of the Indian army that recruited local youth from Ladakh's towns and villages. Military forces were also permanently deputed to previously unprotected borders. However, military maneuvers did not exist in isolation. Such maneuvers were accompanied by concerted civil and military efforts to "heal" and incorporate Ladakhis, more particularly Kargilis, into the national and regional mainstream through development, political autonomy, and decentralization, processes that promised to ameliorate people's suffering and provide them equal access to rights, democracy, and substantive citizenship.

"Wiping out the tears": the Hill Council and the healing touch policy

Although the post-war period inaugurated new regimes of "healing" and "border development" policies, the war itself was bloody and terribly violent. The Kargil war was India and Pakistan's fourth war over the disputed territory of Kashmir. Despite its limited scale, the war attracted unprecedented international attention since it threatened to escalate into a nuclear confrontation between India and Pakistan, a threat that earned Kashmir the dubious title of being the world's most dangerous "nuclear flashpoint" (Hoyt 2003).²⁴

For many state and military officials, the Kargil war signaled something else. To them, it was a clear sign that the anti-India insurgency might be spreading to other parts of Kashmir, including Kargil, where no incidents of non-state terror or violence had been reported until 1999. India feared that their successful counterinsurgency strategy against Kashmiris might have forced Pakistan to open new battlefronts and recruit Kargili men in their proxy-war against India.

What interests me here, however, is not so much the history or the contested genealogies of the Kargil war; rather, I am interested in how the Kargil war provided a moral and strategic imperative to extend the "healing touch" policy of the Mufti Sayeed government to Ladakh, particularly to Kargil, which was the primary location of the war in 1999. Vigorously championed by the Mufti government for Kashmir in 2002 and duly backed by the central government, the "healing touch policy" intended to build on the Indian government's alleged gains in "normalizing" Kashmir after a decade-long insurgency in the state.²⁵ The bloody insurgency and counterinsurgency, it was claimed, had left Kashmir "traumatized" (Behera 2003). A healing touch was "indeed the crying need of the hour for the proverbial common man, who was harassed" (ibid.) by the military's regime of extra-judicial killings, enforced disappearances, and violent counterinsurgency tactics. Even state-sponsored journalists appealed to Indian citizens to pay attention to "populations" instead of focusing solely on their "territorial" obsession with the disputed state:

Kashmir has a special place in the hearts of most Indians who cannot imagine the maps of India without J&K. And yet, very few of us have cared to pay heed to the suffering and anger of its people. During the past thirteen years Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh have been drenched in blood. The air has

constantly resounded with the roar of guns. Hidden underneath that roar are the sounds of the sobs of the children who have not only been orphaned but also mutilated emotionally and physically.

(Kishwar 2003)²⁶

That Jammu, Ladakh, and Kashmir were “drenched in blood,” and no one was willing to “pay heed to the suffering and anger of its people,” became the rallying call to institute policies that would reverse (or at least stop) the violent trajectories of death and destruction in the state.

In Ladakh, however, the politics were remarkably different from Kashmir; Ladakhis, like other minority groups in the state, did not consider the state of Jammu and Kashmir to be an “organic political entity,” a claim based on their independent cultural and political identity before the British and Dogras annexed Ladakh with Kashmir in 1846, forever altering the course of their political destiny (Singh 2011: 26). Building on years of simmering regional discontent in the state, the Sangh Parivar, which included the RSS and other right-wing conservative Hindu groups, championed the trifurcation of J&K in the 1990s along religious and regional lines. According to this plan, Kashmir and Jammu would be declared separate states while Ladakh would be granted a Union Territory (UT) status that would bring it directly under the ambit of the central government—a longstanding demand of Ladakhi Buddhists although one that was rejected outright by the Muslim populations in Kargil.

It was clear to Mufti Sayeed and his government that Kargil needed a different form of “healing” than Kashmir. While Kashmiris had been “victimized by the terrorist violence or brutalized by state agencies” for demanding “freedom” from India, Kargil (despite its majority Muslim population) had witnessed no organized uprising against the Indian state (Kishwar 2003).²⁷ In Kashmir, the government needed to disband renegade terrorist groups now conducting the “dirty work” of state agencies and limit the impunity enjoyed by the military’s unfettered powers. Kargil, on the other hand, required assurances that state beneficence would not be limited to Kashmir. Mufti claimed that Kargil too would share in the state’s beneficence through development policies that granted them greater autonomy in decision-making processes so that they posed no “regional challenge” to the unified state of Jammu and Kashmir.

The “healing touch” of the Mufti government towards Kargil must be understood against the backdrop of contested regional politics and the need to “assuage the decades-old ‘feeling of alienation’” among Kargilis who had been historically marginalized from Kashmir’s social, cultural, and political spheres.²⁸ Indeed, the Kargil war had reinforced India’s vulnerabilities along its disputed frontiers. In order to quell emerging claims of trifurcation by right-wing Hindu groups, and more importantly, to extend the state’s healing touch to remote and war-torn populations in Kargil, the Mufti government championed greater regional and political autonomy for Kargil. An Autonomous Hill Development Council was formed in Kargil in 2003 to decentralize development, deepen democracy, and secure Kargilis more firmly within the Indian national fold. While

first established in the Leh district of Ladakh province in 1995, the urgent need to include Kargilis in the wider body politic and ensure their continued allegiance to the Indian nation-state resulted in the formation of a similar Council in Kargil in 2003. By the time the Kargil war ended, it was clear to the state and central governments that in order to secure a war-torn district against future “infiltrations” from Pakistan, India needed much more than its military prowess. Border populations had to be convinced that the Indian state was bound to its citizens through relations of care and compassion. For instance, in 2003, in his public address to Kargilis, Mufti Sayeed announced his commitment to “wipe out the tears of every victim and do justice to everyone and every region,” a claim that clearly outlined his task to ameliorate the damages of partisan state policies through decentralization and development (Puri 2003):

I know how wisely the elders of Kargil did not allow their youth to go astray and fall prey to Pakistan’s game plan. You did it even when you faced constant neglect and injustice at the hands of the Government. Your decision not to allow the gun to come into your home has kept Kargil safe for everyone.

(ibid.)

To continue to “keep Kargil safe for everyone” (ibid.), opportunities for regional economic growth, development, and local empowerment were considered indispensable to align Kargilis more firmly (and permanently) with the Indian nation-state. The Hill Council was envisioned predominantly as a process of nation-building, an urgent intervention to integrate strategic peripheries into the national-social order through inclusive forms of development and state-making. Aligning border communities, especially in Jammu and Kashmir and the Northeastern states of India, with the country’s vision of progress, development, and sovereignty became the “unfinished task of nation-building,” one in which local populations were transformed into “stakeholders” through discourses of participatory governance, decentralization, and empowerment.²⁹

The military’s “healing touch”: Operation Sadhbhavna (Goodwill)

Mufti’s proclamations of healing were not new for Kargil. In 2001, two years before Mufti’s declaration, the military had launched its own version of the healing touch policy in Ladakh: Operation Sadhbhavna or Goodwill, as it was officially called, was the military’s strategy to “win the hearts and minds” of border communities. The military strongly believed that Ladakh was on the “fringes of an ongoing informal insurgency” (Cariappa et al. 2008). Although the “neglect and lack of development” were “characteristic of border towns and villages,” a “genuine lack of compassion and concern” for Ladakh “had widened the chasm between [populations in this] hinterland and the ‘favored’ residents” of Kashmir (ibid.). And, “if nothing was done to redress the situation in Ladakh, it could, the military believed, ‘go the Kashmir way’” (Colonel Sethi, personal interview).

The Indian military used Operation Sadhbhavna to mark a dramatic shift in its much-criticized approach to defeat Kashmiri insurgency through mindless and indiscriminate violence. India's "naked military rule" had been unable to transform "alienated hearts" (Schirmer 1998: 258). It was time for counterinsurgency operations to be conducted differently:

Northern Command took special care to conduct these operations in a humane and people-friendly manner to ensure minimum collateral damage. Simultaneously, through Operation Sadhbhavna, troops of Northern Command extended their mandate and made concerted attempts to apply the healing touch to win over the people by promoting development activities focusing on their basic needs.

(Lt. Col. Goswami)³⁰

The only way the military could offset the impact of extensive "collateral damage" in insurgency-affected areas was by "extending its mandate" to meet people's "basic needs" through "humane and people-friendly" operations. The "hamstrung provincial government" was inadequate to meet the "basic developmental needs" of populations in remote and isolated peripheries (Cariappa et al. 2008). In order to defeat Pakistan's proxy-war designs in Ladakh, the military decided to provide opportunities for security and development, a task it claimed to handle well, given its resources and access to the remotest parts of the region. While the military's violent counterinsurgency tactics were most acutely experienced by Kashmiris (who were the ones held responsible for spearheading a violent anti-India insurgency), in Kargil, Operation Sadhbhavna was supposed to play a preemptive role by preventing anti-India insurgency from spreading to Kargil and to other parts of Ladakh.

Operation Sadhbhavna followed what is often referred to as the "liberal counterinsurgency doctrine" (acknowledged widely in recently drafted counterinsurgency manuals in India, Canada, and the USA), a doctrine that considers force to be an insufficient strategy to defeat low-intensity conflicts or citizen-led insurgencies around the globe (Slim 2004: 34). New counterinsurgency manuals in India and the USA emphasize the critical role that economic development and the military's humanitarianism can play in rooting out the underlying "causes of and support for insurgencies" (Elmer and Fenton 2007; Anant 2011).

The construction of a "crisis" situation in Kargil—the belief that "if nothing was done to redress the situation in Kargil, it could go the Kashmir way"—anticipated an impending political upheaval and civil unrest due to the lack of substantive opportunities for social and economic development in Kargil. While external agents from Pakistan who wanted to destabilize India's political order had allegedly fueled the "crisis" in Kargil, the lack of development, according to many military officials, created grounds for an impending crisis of loyalty on India's already fragile frontiers. Operation Sadhbhavna, like the US counterinsurgency programs, was therefore based on liberal foundations of the military's new humanitarianism (Fassin and Pandolfi 2010: 17; Kienscherf

2013; Makaremi 2010). It successfully blurred the critical distinctions between welfare and warfare by mobilizing a hypervigilant military in the service of the Indian state's long-term security and stability.³¹

Development: the “will to improve” or the will to rule?

If healing was meant to redress historic wounds, then instituting policies for social and economic development became the most visible expression of a “humanitarian government” (Fassin 2012) in Kargil.³² Development was thus a ubiquitous term, deployed unsparingly by officials from the government as well as the military to assert their moral and humanitarian role in Kargil's post-war polity and to bring strategic border spaces and communities under the state's territorial and sovereign control. Tania Li argues that development is profoundly driven not only by the “will to improve,” but also by the need to “contain political challenges” that threaten the state's normative social, political, and economic orders (2007: 8). Indeed, it is development's contradictory goals—the “stubborn” pursuit of improvement coupled with its intent to monitor political allegiances and alliances—that states normatively appropriate to extend their abilities to control, shape, and regulate citizen subjectivities (ibid.: 1).

The dual task of “healing and winning hearts” was obviously what generated, at least in principle, new opportunities for the military and the civil state to collaborate on issues of development and social welfare. Yet there were crucial differences in the ways their divergent, although not entirely discordant, pursuits of healing and development were actualized in practice and shaped people's identities and political subjectivities.

Although invested in *controlling* estranged populations, the Hill Council was a *democratic* intervention to strengthen state- and nation-building on India's frontiers through participatory development, decentralization, and self-governance. By foregrounding plurality and difference as dominant modes of border governance, the Hill Council mobilized many marginal communities, including Brogpas, to seek political representation on the Council. Operation Sadhbhavna, much like the Hill Council itself, used discourses of healing and development to transform civilian allegiances by providing accessible opportunities for employment, education, and health care. And, yet, it was primarily a *counterinsurgency* strategy meant to closely track people's allegiances and exert maximum control over local space, resources, and territory. To focus overwhelmingly on their larger ideological agendas, however, is to ignore the crucial differences in which their divergent, although not entirely discordant, pursuits of healing and development played out in practice and shaped citizen identities and subjectivities.

In order to trace the implications of the state's and the military's post-war initiatives in Kargil, I, therefore, ask: To what extent were discourses of healing, compassion, and heart warfare able to transform “hearts” and secure people's attachments to “particular regimes of sovereignty, citizenship, and regulation” (Poole 2004: 60)? To what extent did the initiatives to decentralize power and development extend people's participation in democratic forms of state-making?

And to what extent did democracy itself become complicit in extending the military's sphere of influence over people's social and political lives?

I unpack the complex relationship between democracy, counterinsurgency, and citizenship by focusing on Brogpas, an ethnic minority community of around 3000 people, who live in four villages along the disputed line of control between India and Pakistan. The case of Brogpas is exemplary because it reveals the persistent attempts by postcolonial states like India to "manage" populations considered peripheral to hegemonic visions of culture, civilization, place, and politics. By virtue of their "marginal" social status and "strategic" location on the disputed border, however, Brogpas are also uniquely situated in the complex social and political landscape of Ladakh to offer a remarkable glimpse into the workings of the Hill Council and Operation Sadhbhavna.

Brogpas: political inclusion or national sacrifice

Although insignificant to the region's party and electoral politics, Brogpas are a hyper-visible cultural minority, widely stereotyped for their authentic "Aryan" origins and their "quasi-Buddhist" religious identities. Their disenfranchisement from the region's democratic politics, hyper-visibility in tourist circuits, and strategic border location position Brogpas as Ladakh's quintessential minority, precisely the kind that the healing touch of the government was intended to reach. The Hill Council's participatory rhetoric created among Brogpas a new hope of inclusion in Kargil's political mainstream that rested on an official affirmation of their "distinct" culture as well as an acknowledgement of the years of discriminatory state policies.

I show how the Hill Council constituted Brogpa "difference" as a political category and transformed culture into a widely accepted register of rights and entitlements. Since culture became the primary condition of recognition, Brogpas were compelled to present themselves as "undiluted" cultural others in order to secure a seat in the Hill Council. It became imperative for Brogpas to prove their "cultural authenticity" by holding steadfastly to their histories of racial, linguistic, and religious exclusivity (Povinelli 2002). In fact, for many border communities, including Brogpas, democracy was not always experienced as a set of social and political arrangements that enhanced human freedom and capabilities. Democracy instead paradoxically imposed new constraints by recognizing cultural rights and difference as the only viable frameworks for rights and equal citizenship (*ibid.*). Modes of political recognition that were anchored in tropes of culture and identity reinforced, and indeed validated, discourses of Brogpas' cultural otherness without offering them substantive political opportunities or enhancing their stakes in Kargil's democratic politics (see also van Beek 1999).³³ Ultimately, Brogpas failed to secure an exclusive representation in the Hill Council due to their miniscule population, thwarting their hopes of any meaningful inclusion in Kargil's democratic politics. Contrary to its claims of fostering participatory democracy, then, the Hill Council not only perpetuated pre-existing forms of party, electoral, and population politics, but also reinforced narratives of Brogpas'

cultural otherness and anchored them more firmly on the margins of Kargili society and politics.

While democratic politics failed to significantly alter their stakes in regional and national politics, the intense militarization of borders and the implementation of Operation Sadhbhavna in the post-war period profoundly transformed the ways Brogpas envisioned their place in the nation. Indeed, Brogpas aligned with the nation not through tropes of political participation or cultural membership but through the forms of military service they rendered as porters, recruits, and spies during and after the war. Their reliance on the military increased as they became marginal “beneficiaries” of the military’s “development” initiatives—including army-run schools, medical clinics, vocational training centers, and women’s empowerment cells.

Yet, these were also communities that overwhelmingly bore the brunt of the state’s obsessions with territorial defense and security and on whose bodies, lands, and resources the state marked its violent and sovereign powers. “Only [a] benign, disinterested nation that has its people’s welfare at heart can ask for sacrifices,” claims Sandy Smith-Nonini, whose work on the military’s humanitarian efforts during a low-intensity war in El Salvador shows the ubiquity of emotions of care and compassion in counterinsurgency operations across the globe (2010: 124). The military’s pacification strategy, she provocatively states, “wore medicine’s sheep’s clothing to disguise the wolves of state terror” and neutralize any potential opposition to the military’s persistent demands for land and labor (*ibid.*: 123). Operation Sadhbhavna, too, was “hardly a neutral or altruistic undertaking” (Aggarwal and Bhan 2009: 21): it deployed tactics of healing and heart warfare to minimize political dissent against the military’s aggressive expansion in the post-war period.

More importantly, Operation Sadhbhavna compelled Brogpas to reformat their religious and ethnic histories to align with emerging, albeit pervasive, regimes of suspicion and surveillance, mostly over Ladakh’s Muslim minorities who were considered to be less loyal to India than their Buddhist counterparts (van Beek 1998a; Pinault 1999: 296; Aggarwal 2004: 45). Since they were stereotyped as “quasi-Buddhists,” and religious liminality was an indication of wavering loyalties, Brogpas began to identify strongly as Buddhists in the post-war period. The military’s surveillance apparatus extended its hold over Brogpa lives, into the very core of their histories, memories, and identities.

Even discourses of democracy and decentralization failed to offer a substantive critique of the extensive militarization of local land, labor, and livelihoods. To a degree, it was the failure of the Hill Council to provide a robust alternative to procedural democracy and discourses of majoritarianism that furthered the military’s extensive hold over people’s lives. The sweeping militarization of local labor and resources proceeded unchecked to a large extent because institutions of democracy (including the state government and the Hill Council) were thoroughly aligned with the values of defense and border security. Such alignments, I argue, ultimately weakened democratic governance in Kargil by subordinating people’s freedoms and rights to the dictates of defense and national security.

In a context where democracy recycled electoral and party politics without offering a robust alternative to national security and its attendant ideologies, the military became all too powerful. It asserted its control over local labor, land, and livelihoods in the name of nation and security, ensuring that militarization became a social-cultural project and an integral part of people's political imaginaries (Das and Poole 2004: 19). Indeed, following Lutz (2001), I argue that it is not only *wars* but the Indian state's ongoing investments in *war preparation* that make the military integral to the social and political landscape of Kargil and render the pursuit of democracy profoundly unstable. To me, what is remarkable about the political situation in Kargil is not that democracy is completely co-opted by the forces of militarism but that the boundaries between democracy and militarism are precarious and unstable, threatened every day through subtle and more explicit power maneuvers between civil and military officials and their intense competition over the use and access to resources. However, democracy is most threatened by the unquestioned premise that no matter how much the military preys on local labor and resources, it remains indispensable for the nation's defense and security.³⁴ The "timidity of India's democratic institutions" (Sundar 2011: 61) in the face of what are deemed to be critical security threats is precisely what legitimizes the indiscriminate use of local resources for national security, and sanctions the close tracking of people's internal dispositions and national loyalties. In a place where projects of wars or war preparations trump democracy, the pursuit of "healing," I maintain, can only be ephemeral, haunted always by the specter of unrest and violence that pose a persistent threat to the goals of political order and stability.

Precarious positions

More popular for its Brogpa inhabitants than for its location on the Line of Control, Garkone, where I conducted most of my fieldwork, is one of the four Buddhist Brogpa villages that lies 40 miles to the northeast of Kargil, the district headquarters with a predominantly Shi'a Muslim population. Two of the four Brogpa villages, Dha and Hanu, fall under the jurisdiction of the predominantly Buddhist majority district of Leh. Together, Leh and Kargil form Ladakh, the largest province in the northernmost Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. Regardless of a tumultuous history that includes enduring the brunt of four different wars between India and Pakistan, Brogpas remain Ladakh's quintessential others, a community of around 3,000 people who are celebrated, but more often ridiculed, for their "pure" Aryan origins and their distinct culture, language, and history. In addition to tracing it to their "distinct" origins and history, their difference is invariably attributed to their resistance to change and modernity, perceptions that have consigned Brogpas to the margins of the sociopolitical order in Ladakh. Furthermore, stories of Brogpa distinction and remoteness elide their complex histories of engagement with state and non-state forces, and their sustained interactions with those in positions of power and authority.

When I arrived in Garkone in October 1999 as a graduate student from the University of Delhi, Garkone was still recovering from the ravages of the Kargil

war. The entire landscape was dotted with remnants of a war that, despite lasting only three months, had left in its wake considerable devastation—shattered window panes, cracked walls, charred buildings, splinters, and unused shells were scattered everywhere, reminding Brogpas constantly of the dangers of living on the India–Pakistan border. However, unlike many other villagers along the LoC, very few people from Garkone had migrated to safer spaces within Ladakh. While Brogpas attributed this decision to the steep mountains on either side of the village that offered them some protection from Pakistani shells, it was also, as they liked to assert, a gesture to demonstrate their unquestioned loyalty to India. I was to realize much later how claims to loyalty and nationalism animated quotidian discussions in the village, and were often sources of intense intra- and inter-familial conflicts, issues I will tackle in later chapters. But first let me recount my several entries into Garkone. Unlike a single arrival narrative, I have several, primarily because dramatic political changes shaped each of my entries into Garkone, a village that falls within the restricted “Inner Line” area because of its proximity to the disputed India–Pakistan border. Intensely monitored by the military, entry into Inner Line villages is not easy and requires researchers (regardless of their national origin) to seek elaborate permits from state officials in Leh or Kargil. Extensive checkpoints that guard the Inner Line are spatial assertions of the military’s power in Kargil but they are also deeply entrenched in ideologies of “protection” and “security” for India’s strategic people and territories (Aggarwal 2004: 58).³⁵ My affiliation with an Indian university and local contacts in an NGO ensured my easy passage into Garkone in 1999. Still recovering from the war, the army had not yet launched Operation Sadhbhavna, but, needless to say, security arrangements on the border were tight. To my surprise, however, I was not stopped at check posts or questioned by the military about the nature of my visit to Garkone.

When I returned in the summers of 2000 and 2001 as an overseas scholar, the militarization of Brogpa lives had taken a different turn. It was not unusual to find military officers participating in local dances and rituals, and presiding over local village meetings. The army’s involvement in Operation Sadhbhavna had profoundly changed the texture of civil–military relations. Sadhbhavna activities were also in full display in 2001 and the army used every opportunity to familiarize themselves with the local community and landscape. Within this context, I was approached by the stationed officer responsible for Sadhbhavna to draft a ten-page orientation guide for newly deployed soldiers unfamiliar with the local culture. Despite my reluctance to enlist in what appeared in retrospect to be a much smaller-scale (and less institutionalized) version of the “human terrain system (HTS)” but potentially as problematic, I conceded.³⁶

The villagers viewed my assignment as an avenue to promote their culture and establish better rapport with the army. I too saw it as an opportunity to interview officers associated with the operation. Moreover, it was nearly impossible to deny outright the military’s request, given the powers they wielded over the space and its people. Following Kovats-Bernat’s point that there has been very little discussion of how unstable field sites can potentially limit the “ethnographer’s

control over ethical decisions” (2002: 3), I learned that in a space where the military was widely seen as a source of economic mobility, the distinction between ethical and unethical was not always clear, which made it even harder for me to translate our disciplinary ethics into practice. Competing ethical narratives certainly complicated my decision-making abilities in the field, especially when the booklet was perceived by Brogpas as a way to establish relations of trust and camaraderie with the military that could, at least potentially, allow Brogpas access to short-term economic and material benefits. Thus, the villagers’ economic dependence on the military made it extremely difficult for me to deny writing the booklet. I was pulled into the universe of locally shared concerns that privileged tangible economic benefits and greater visibility for the community over an amorphous fear of potential repercussions.

In 2002, when I returned for another summer of fieldwork, Indians were expecting an impending nuclear confrontation with Pakistan as a result of the December 2001 attack on the Indian Parliament—an event that was immediately compared to the attack on the World Trade Center; this strategic comparison had been orchestrated by the Indian media to garner global sympathy for India’s ongoing “war on terror” (see International Crisis Group 2003: 22). With national anxieties at an all-time high, outsiders who traversed the Inner Line were placed under close surveillance by the Indian army. Regardless of my Indian nationality and previous visits to the village, the army now considered me to be a foreigner with an inexplicable interest in Ladakh. My identity as a Kashmiri did not help either, given the protracted armed struggle against India since the 1990s and the fact that Kashmiri “dissidents” at the time were also implicated in the attack on the Indian Parliament. A brief visit by a close Kashmiri Muslim friend to Garkone in 2001 had further fueled suspicions about me, despite my Hindu name and origin. Dangerous allegations of espionage and money laundering compounded with questions about my identity and marital status made it impossible to work in a space where structures of security and surveillance had turned their gaze on people’s everyday lives and routines. I was certainly no exception. “Stories of espionage are frequent in an area where military inspections regulate entry and exit,” Ravina Aggarwal asserts (2004: 96). Within the context of the Kargil war as well as the recent attack on the Indian Parliament, state paranoia had reached new heights.

So that I would not pose a security threat to a fragile national order, the military instructed me to leave the village in 2002. I decided to spend the summer in Leh to meet with senior army officials and obtain a security clearance for my future trips to the region. Although the charges against me were unfounded, primarily the result of the military’s paranoia about my status and identity, my expulsion from the village in 2002 brought to the fore my vulnerabilities as a young, female, overseas researcher who was intimately tied to Kashmir. It also made explicit the precarious relationship between civilians and military in conflict zones where questions of national security blur the boundaries between citizens and suspects, dramatically altering the stakes associated with religious identities, nationalities, and citizenship.

My work is deeply influenced by anthropological insights that question perceptions of the state as a rational, cohesive actor (Gupta 1995; Sivaramakrishnan 1999, 2000). I claim that rather than having a “coherency and consistency of purpose,” state activities, as David Nugent explains, can be “chaotic and incoherent assemblages of sites, processes, and institutions that lack any underlying, coordinating logic, and often work at cross-purposes with one another” (2004: 198). Such moments of chaos and incoherence were obvious in post-war Kargil as the military and the civilian government both expanded their reach and access “into the full frontiers” (Radcliffe and Westwood 1996: 66). Although in concert with objectives of defense and national security, civilian officers (including bureaucrats, ministers, and Councillors) often expressed their frustration at the military’s self-proclaimed task as “nation-builders” and their attempts to “mask” counterinsurgency as a moral mission of social welfare and development. Notwithstanding their common goal to “heal” hearts through development and nation-building, civil authorities’ rationalities of rule (as well as their modalities) were profoundly different, leading to frequent conflicts between civil and military officers.

In a context, where sizable portions of the region’s resources were under the military’s control, Operation Sadhbhavna not only depoliticized its goals of surveillance, but also generated tensions between the civil state and the military over questions of representation, accountability, legitimacy, and resource allocation. The military, by virtue of its investments in defense and territorial sovereignty had spatial access to critical border sites that were off-limits to the civilian bureaucracy. The military also had more resources at its disposal that enabled it to build roads and bridges and establish a greater presence in remote villages of the province. Although overtly about the “duplication” of schools or medical dispensaries (see Aggarwal and Bhan 2009), everyday conflicts between civil and military officers reflected deeper crises of authority and legitimacy in a border province where the military’s presence had been a permanent feature of life since 1952 and where the number of military personnel (at least in some villages) was equal to—or, even exceeded—the civilian population of these villages (Daultrey and Gergan 2011: 1; van Beek 2000a: 537). Civil officers and Councillors often complained about the “high-handedness” of the military and the impunity and powers they enjoyed in a conflict zone, whereas military officers highlighted the “corruption” and “inefficiency” of the civil administration. Indeed, many in the military believed that the civil administration’s apathy had held Kargil back from progress and development. Under the thin veneer of partnership and collaboration between the civilian government and the military, then, a pervasive rhetoric of Operation Sadhbhavna, there were many ruffled feathers, bruised egos, and fragile relationships.

In 2003, when I returned for my long-term fieldwork, the military’s continued interest in my presence was a hindrance but also an opportunity. I was questioned frequently, especially when the village was shelled or when the purpose of my extended stay needed to be ascertained, something that happened quite often. I used many of these interactions to clarify the nature of my project and

to seek formal interviews with key officers. Several military officers frequently visited Garkone and other nearby villages to conduct and monitor Sadhbhavna activities, affording me opportunities to interact with them outside the military brigade, in settings that were informal. It was impossible to ignore the gendered nature of my interactions with the military. Several officers who visited the village under the pretext of Operation Sadhbhavna were there to “check on me out of sheer curiosity,” as I was told many times. Despite my efforts to direct our conversations, I was invariably asked questions that were deeply personal. Operating under the directives of national security, the military had the power to transform the intimate details of people’s lives into public transcripts.

However, as I demonstrate in this book, Brogpas craft spaces to exercise their political agency despite the seemingly absolute powers of the military. True even in my case, I attempted to call into question the military’s indeterminate exercise of power by strategically aligning with civilian officials who were equally troubled (and at times even harassed) by the military’s unquestioned powers in border areas. For instance, one recurring argument about the credibility of my Inner Line permit brought to the surface the arbitrary nature of the military’s authority on the borders, and also the fragile relationship between the civil state and the military, an issue explored in detail in Chapter 5. Despite the established convention of seeking Inner Line permits from civilian offices in the district, my Inner Line permits were often discredited by the military on the premise that no civilian office had the legitimate authority to issue them. Regardless of what the law decreed, its futility was all too apparent in a situation where the military’s credibility rested on monitoring people’s movements across officially delineated boundaries and its powers to constrain legal rights and privileges to preempt any perceived threats to the nation’s security.

More importantly, at stake in such struggles for power between the civil state and the military were the very limits and definitions of democracy and the intricate negotiations for control over India’s strategic spaces and territory. For reasons that will become clear later in the book, despite such misgivings, the incessant militarization of everyday life as well as the military’s role in the region’s economy was hardly ever disputed. Although many civilian officials were deeply bothered by the military’s control over the region’s resources—such as roads, an airport (that had not yet been opened to civil flights), and vast portions of land in Kargil town, factors they felt had undermined the development of civil infrastructure and industry—they unsuccessfully negotiated for the relocation of the military from the town to remoter areas in the district instead of demanding complete demilitarization, a long-standing demand of their Kashmiri counterparts. Demilitarization, they claimed, would be disastrous for Kargil because people’s livelihoods and economies relied so much on the military. Besides, most civil officers, administrators, and politicians were aligned with the priorities of defense and security even though the military’s “high-handedness” was not always tolerated. The impossibility of envisioning an economic future for Kargil that did not overwhelmingly rely on the pursuits of defense and security profoundly

reinforced the credibility of the military and its righteous claims over a marginal people and territory.

Research methodologies

This book is based on intense qualitative fieldwork in Ladakh from 1999 to 2012; almost three years of participant observation and interviews in the villages of Garkone and Dha, and the towns of Leh, Kargil, and Srinagar; extended interviews with military brigadiers, colonels, Lt. Colonels, soldiers, politicians, and Councillors in Leh, Kargil, and Srinagar; and discourse analysis of relevant policy documents, related to Operation Sadhbhavna and the Hill Council. My project also relies on research visits in 2005, 2009, and 2012, during which I conducted follow-up interviews of military professionals, state officials, and villagers. I also draw from telephone conversations and online correspondence I have had with my close contacts over the past decade. Throughout this book, I use pseudonyms to protect the identities of my informants, especially when the information is sensitive. This includes all the military officers that I interviewed for the project. For interviews with civil state officers, I employ pseudonyms only if the data was not official or public.

By the time I started my long-term fieldwork in 2003, I understood the local language, Brogskad, well enough to spend hours participating in village-wide conversations about the Hill Council and to comprehend the specific ways Brogpa men and women framed their claims to political representation. I also participated in innumerable village meetings that mostly turned out to be futile attempts at choosing a consensual candidate for the Council. I assisted the women in their fields as they plowed and watered them. In the winters, when they were relatively free from their chores, we sat in harvested fields around stacks of searing firewood to keep ourselves warm and exchanged stories and gossip on diverse topics—from recent elopements and love affairs in the village to the military’s partisan favors to some villagers to ongoing *partybaazi* (politicking) for the Councillor’s seat among competing male candidates. Numerous interviews with Councillors and politicians in Kargil contributed to my understanding of the internal contestations and workings of the Hill Council. By participating in a range of Operation Sadhbhavna events and programs, including health camps, national integration events, and Independence and Republic Day celebrations, I was able to document the detailed and nuanced interactions between Brogpas and the military; how expectations of good citizenship were articulated and perceived; and the ways Brogpas actively forged relationships of familiarity and patronage with the military.

In addition to participant observation, I spent the first two months in 2003 conducting a comprehensive socio-economic census of every other household in Garkone. The census helped me collect data related to family socio-economic status, strategies of income generation, access to civil state and military jobs, etc. I followed up the census surveys with open-ended interviews with several Brogpa men and women in addition to conducting extensive life-history interviews of

25 individuals, which allowed me to explore the complex relationship between people's personal histories and broader political economic forces such as state building, wars, and militarization.

Overview of the book

In Chapter 1, I situate Brogpas within the broader social, political, and economic landscape of Jammu and Kashmir. Brogpas were seen as insular and self-contained despite their contested and tumultuous history of wars, political subjugation, religious conversions, and migrations. Stereotypes about their distinct racial and quasi-Buddhist identities further secured them on Ladakh's social and political periphery. In a context where religion had become deeply politicized, Brogpa religious liminality was hardly innocuous. Brogpa difference did not just slot them as Ladakh's cultural others; it also posed a threat to the nation-state's hegemonic religious and territorial orders.

In Chapter 2, I discuss the recently formed autonomous hill-development Council in Kargil designed to decentralize development resources and political power to India's frontier communities. For Brogpas, whose "distinct" cultural and religious practices had placed them on the fringes of Kargil's social and political order, the Council promised social justice, equitable development, and political inclusion. I will explore how and why despite its emancipatory potential, the Council was deeply constrained by the unfolding party, representational, and identity politics, and, ultimately, unable to extend opportunities for inclusive and participatory development to Brogpas.

Chapter 3 documents how militarized labor for Brogpas became grounds to articulate new claims of belonging and citizenship. In a context where discourses of cultural rights and difference failed to secure them a political seat in the Council, Brogpas relied on their roles as spies, porters, and war heroes to renegotiate their inclusion and membership within the wider body politic. However, as nationalist visions of cohesion and citizenship became pervasive, Brogpa social institutions and landscapes dramatically transformed to accommodate the military's growing requirement for civilian labor and resources.

Chapter 4 turns to Operation Sadhbhavna or Goodwill, essentially a military-led counterinsurgency operation that relied on the rhetoric of development and human security to "win the hearts and minds" of border communities. Purportedly meant to foster inclusion of alienated communities into the national mainstream, the rhetoric of Sadhbhavna was based on strategic exclusions—in particular, on the preemptive anticipation of disloyalty from Kargili Muslims and their representation as "incipient terrorists." Such exclusions manifested in the everyday attempts of Brogpas to underplay their complex identities in favor of an unequivocal Buddhist identity.

In Chapter 5, I argue that the complexities of the military's role in civic affairs, particularly in the Indian context, cannot be captured using prosaic analyses that either glorify India's democratic success or brand it as a failed state. Instead, what is required is an ethnographic analysis of states and democracies "that

remain solidly rooted in the examinations of everyday life” (Krohn-Hansen and Nustad 2005: 21). Quotidian conflicts over resource use and compensations, and access and regulation through military checkpoints revealed an uneasy relationship between the civil state and the military in Kargil even as the underlying logic of a national security state remained largely unchallenged.

In the concluding chapter of the book, I reiterate that humanist tropes of healing and heart warfare must be viewed as ways to silence alternative visions of territory, sovereignty, and democracy in “zones of exception” where people’s everyday mobility and their rights and access to resources are severely curtailed by the urgencies of wars, war preparation, and national security. While ideals of democracy, development, and citizenship were not altogether suspended in Kargil, they remained subservient to the exigencies of security and counterinsurgency.

1 Becoming Brogpa

Behind these towering mountains, there is another Brogpa village called Ganishah. We visited Ganishah often to celebrate weddings and ceremonies and to exchange commodities such as salt, apricots, and yoghurt. Sometimes we visited Ganishah to settle ownership disputes over land, resources, and animals. The last I traveled to Ganishah was in 1948 to retrieve my goat that a local herder (*pajlu*) had stolen. I promised a *sen* of salt to a group of young men who would divulge the name of the *pajlu*. Having found out who he was, I decided to return to Ganishah in a few days to retrieve the goat. Soon after, the 1948 war broke out and the government created a border between Ganishah from Garkone. The military calls it Ganoks now; we no longer visit Ganishah for the Bononah festival; we hope they still worship our common gods and ancestors.

(Gandup dudo)

Gandup dudo's narrative reveals the unexpected ways Brogpa lives were disrupted in 1948 due to India and Pakistan's first war over the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir. The war splintered Brogpa villages between India and Pakistan and reduced Brogpas to a miniscule minority in each state. As India and Pakistan consolidated their sovereign control over the severed portions of Ladakhi territory, Brogpas, who had for centuries shared bonds of trade, family, and kinship, were violently torn apart.

The war was not the first state intervention that dramatically altered Brogpa subjectivities and reinforced their status as an ethnic, linguistic, and cultural minority. Since the sixteenth century, a series of pre-colonial and colonial interventions had firmly established Brogpa difference in Ladakh on the basis of their race, religion, and language. Ladakhi and Tibetan kings who ruled Ladakh from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century viewed Brogpa defiance to assimilate as a threat to established codes of social order and religiosity, as a result of which Brogpas were deeply ridiculed and chastised for their "difference." In the nineteenth century, the British introduced racialized schemes to impose a rigid order over the messy cultural and linguistic diversity of the Northwest Himalayas, a scheme in which Brogpas were categorized as a distinct racial group based on their linguistic and physical characteristics. No longer just cultural or linguistic, thus, Brogpa difference became deeply racialized in the nineteenth century, further solidifying

perceptions of Brogpa difference as natural and immutable. In the postcolonial politics of nation-building, Brogpa “difference” was reworked yet again to represent it as a living remnant of a primitive past, an aspect of their remote and insular culture rather than a product of complex histories of contact and domination. According to official and popular imaginaries, thus, Brogpas remained ensconced in the past, fiercely clinging to their unchanged culture and traditions.

Yet, contrary to popular stereotypes that attribute Brogpa marginality to their isolation and remoteness, Brogpas trace their disenfranchisement to a long and complex history of state- and nation-making on what is now India’s most disputed frontier. In other words, Brogpa marginality, far from being the outcome of their “insularity,” was cemented through their long and tumultuous encounters with the Ladakhi kings, British scholars, and the postcolonial Indian state. Much like the rest of Ladakh that was “marginalized through its incorporation into new frames of political, economic, and cultural normalcy” (van Beek 1999: 436, 437) represented by colonial and postcolonial centers of power, Brogpa marginality and difference were also historic and relational. Before I delve deeper into the pre-colonial and colonial histories that have constituted Brogpa perceptions of difference and marginality, I want to return briefly to the moment in 1948 when Brogpa villages were divided between India and Pakistan. This event, more than others, initiated a series of irrevocable territorial changes that solidified Ladakh’s status as India’s strategic frontier, along with powerfully shaping Brogpa perceptions of difference, identity, and community.

The 1948 war and its antecedents

In order to understand the events that culminated in the division of Brogpa villages between India and Pakistan, it is important to first trace the tumultuous events that led to the war and consolidated Ladakh’s position as India’s strategic frontier. An important trade and transit center on the Central Asian trade route that traversed through China, Tibet, Yarkand, and Kashmir since the ninth century C.E., Ladakh was transformed from an *entrepôt* to a “barrier” (Searight 1976) through sustained interventions by the Indian, Pakistani, and Chinese states in the twentieth century. The movement of people across fluid and unmarked territories as well as the thriving trade in commodities as diverse as spices, textiles, tea, apricots, raw silk, and cashmere came to a halt with India’s partition in 1947 and the consolidation of China’s rule over Tibet in 1950. Indeed, until 1948, the Brogpa village of Ganoks was a “halting place on the caravan route between Ladakh and Baltistan,” now in Pakistan (Albinia 2008: 252).¹ However, since India’s partition, a series of territorial wars and disputes over the status of Jammu and Kashmir have violently eroded past routes, trails, and histories. No longer at the “crossroads of Central Asia” (Rizvi 1996), Ladakh is now a strategic piece of territory, “a dependency on the fringes of Kashmir” (Aggarwal 2004: 36), bordered by Pakistan on its west and by Tibet on its east (see also van Beek 1996).

Ladakh’s place as India’s strategic periphery must be traced back to the nineteenth century when the Dogras annexed the independent kingdom of Ladakh

to Jammu in 1842 and, ultimately, to Kashmir in 1846. Dogras are remembered for their “rapacious appetite” (Gutschow 2004: 24) for territory and resources and their “colonial” appropriation of local labor through *corvée* or indentured labor (Aggarwal 2004: 35; Bray 2009: 49; Grist 1994). Most of all, they are remembered for sealing together the political destinies of Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh. By consolidating disparate territories into a unified political entity, the Dogras in conjunction with the British birthed the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir in 1850, ushering in a series of political changes that brought Ladakh under the dominion of Jammu and Kashmir.

As a princely state, however, Jammu and Kashmir was only “nominally ruled” by the Dogras (Kabir 2009: 6).² Indeed, a “compliant buffer state” was precisely what the British needed to prevent Russian imperial designs on India’s northern frontier regions, an objective they achieved through a Dogra-ruled princely state whose military and foreign affairs were firmly under British control (Bray 2009: 49). However, after India’s partition in 1947, the political fate of the 572 princely states, unlike other states in British India, was ambiguous. It was not entirely clear whether the princely states would join Pakistan, choose to remain with India, or prefer independence. Especially in Jammu and Kashmir where a Hindu Dogra Maharaja ruled a majority of Muslim subjects, the situation was far murkier. While some speculate that the Maharaja was contemplating independence for Kashmir, others argue that the Maharaja, an unpopular Hindu king, was scheming with India to finalize Kashmir’s accession to India.

It was within this politically fraught context that Pakistani tribesmen attacked the Northern areas of Kashmir in 1948 in order to annex Kashmiri territory to Pakistan, an event that led to the first war between India and Pakistan over the disputed status of Jammu and Kashmir. The Maharaja sought help from India to drive out the Pakistani raiders, in return signing an instrument of accession with India, a document that the Indian government continues to uphold as its rightful and legal claim over Kashmir. Pakistan rejects the validity of the instrument of accession, claiming that the Maharaja was a despot who refused to respect the overwhelming support of Kashmiris for Pakistan.

Regardless of their claims and counterclaims, the first Kashmir war of 1948, as it is popularly called, splintered the territory of Jammu and Kashmir between India and Pakistan. On 1 January 1949, almost a year into India and Pakistan’s first war over Jammu and Kashmir, the UN declared a 435-mile-long *de facto* border between the two recently founded nation-states that had barely recovered from the trauma and the “genocidal” violence of the partition (Pandey 2001: 1). Referred to as the ceasefire line, the *de facto* border divided Pakistan-administered or “Azad Kashmir” and the Northern territories of Gilgit and Baltistan from Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir. The ceasefire line cut through shared territories and landscapes—arbitrarily spitting people, villages, and neighborhoods (Aggarwal 2004) and challenging the “usual iterations of the nation-state’s [territoriality] and boundedness” (Kabir 2009: 8).

Recognizing the fragility of the territorial arrangement, the UN declared the ceasefire line to be the *de facto* border between India and Pakistan with the

promise of resolving divergent claims over Kashmir's political status and sovereignty. After the third major war between India and Pakistan in 1971, the ceasefire line was re-designated the Line of Control (LoC), a semantic fix, which according to some Pakistani commentators neither entailed a legal re-evaluation of Indian and Pakistani claims to the disputed territory nor helped resolve the political impasse over Kashmir (Schofield 2003:118).³ For some Indian analysts, however, the re-designation represented Pakistan's tacit commitment that the "line would gradually [be] endowed with the characteristics of an international border" (cited in Schofield 2003: 118). The LoC has since persisted as a powerful symbol of contested territorialities. Indeed, repeatedly "drawn and redrawn by battles and treaties" (Aggarwal 2004: 1), the LoC has resulted in "an endemic irresolution" (Kabir 2009: 7) that continues to deter the prospects of peace and solidarity between India and Pakistan.

The LoC, however, was not just an administrative boundary that was sketched to define the nascent territorialities of warring nation-states. As many scholars passionately note, the LoC rewrote space and place, disrupted shared codes and cosmologies, and redefined notions of being and belonging (Aggarwal 2004). For Brogpas, the LoC separated the Brogpa villages of Garkone, Dha, Dartsigs, and Ganoks between India and Pakistan. After 1948, Ganoks became part of the Northern Areas, a Pakistani territory that included the regions of Gilgit and Baltistan while the villages of Garkone, Dha, and Dartsigs in Ladakh remained under India's territorial control.

Among many elders in Garkone, the past is reminiscent of shared connections and violent disconnections: the thriving networks of trade, community, marriage, rituals, and kinship that characterized their relationships prior to 1948 are largely absent now as Brogpas on either side of the border have become embroiled in projects of border security, sovereignty, and nation-building.⁴ The inchoate border has crystallized into a "natural and eternal geograph[y] of separation," a process that profoundly shapes the everyday constructions of identity and community along the border (ibid.: 217). Despite the sealed and impenetrable borders that divide them, Garkonepas often talk of villagers in Ganoks as their kith and kin, most of whom they have never seen or met. In a context, where Brogpa "difference" situates them on the margins of the social and political order, evoking shared linguistic and cultural connections affirms their pride in their identities and allows them to reflect on their long and prolonged struggle against Ladakhi kingship, against divisive ethnic and religious politics, and against modern sovereign borders that now divide them between India and Pakistan.

I argue in this chapter that the demarcation of the LoC was only one event in a series of political events that instilled in Brogpas a profound sense of marginality and disenfranchisement. Unlike earlier accounts of Brogpa history or difference, I am not interested in rehearsing arguments that consider Brogpa marginality to be ahistoric or politically inert. Ravina Aggarwal has forcefully demonstrated how the processes of state and nation-making are most intimately experienced on the borders (2004: 3)—the nation's quintessential margins—where citizen subjectivities and identities are not shielded but strongly shaped by the imperatives to

transform “‘unruly subjects’ into lawful subjects of the state” (Das and Poole 2004: 9). Following scholars who consider marginality (both spatial and cultural) to be a “necessary entailment of the state” (ibid.: 4), sites where “the state is constantly refounding its modes of order and lawmaking” (ibid.: 8), I intend to show how Brogpa difference was not peripheral but foundational to the consolidation of several political regimes in Ladakh, long before the transformation of Ladakh into India’s contested frontier.

Disculturation, assimilation, and Brogpa resistance

Brogpas live in the border villages of Dha, Hanu, Dartsigs, Garkone, Chulichen, Batalik, and Silmoo along the LoC. Dha and Hanu are under the jurisdiction of the Buddhist-dominated Leh district while the remaining villages fall under the ambit of the Kargil district, which is predominantly Shia. Furthermore, while Chulichen, Batalik, and Silmoo are predominantly Muslim, almost all the inhabitants of Dha, Hanu, Dartsigs, and Garkone are Buddhists. Unlike the Muslim Brogpas of Chulichen and Batalik who have wholeheartedly embraced Islam, Buddhist Brogpas are represented as a people with culture but no defined religion (Tsing 1993: 54), an identity that portrays them as the ardent and stubborn followers of a pre-Buddhist faith. Therefore, Buddhist Brogpas, more than their Muslim counterparts, are seen as the “primitive” remnants of a bygone past, repositories of tradition but also relatively more insular and reluctant to change.

Considered to be the original inhabitants of Ladakh, Brogpas trace their tumultuous escape from Gilgit’s oppressive rulers in the ninth century and their final settlement in the fertile villages of Ladakh through a rich corpus of hymns, songs, and folklore that have been passed down through generations (Francke 1901; Petech 1977; Vohra 1989a; Phuntsog 1999; Kloos 2012).⁵ In popular and scholarly literature, Brogpas are often referred to as Dards—a term first used by the British Orientalists in the nineteenth century to impose linguistic and racial continuity on a diverse set of people who inhabited the northwestern states of British India. According to one such British Orientalist, Frederick Drew, the term Brokpa or Blokpa became common over time as “Dards” of the Hindukush preferred to live in the hills or close to their highland pastures (1875: 176).⁶ Therefore, for Drew, the terms Brogpa and Dard were interchangeable: while Brogpa referred to an occupational group, the category Dard was racial and linguistic, a point I will return to later in the chapter.

Most contemporary historians and ethnographers continue to use Dard and Brogpa interchangeably to refer to the same group of people, although both terms are politically fraught. The label Brogpa is associated with being ignorant, untamed, and uncivilized in Ladakh, even though villagers from Garkone prefer the term, using the appellation Dard only when they are recounting their complex histories of migration into Ladakh.⁷ On the other hand, the uncritical use of the term “Dard” reinforces colonial schemes to racialize Brogpas and treat their physical and linguistic differences as static, unchanging, or even genetic. Written and rewritten over the years by anthropologists, missionaries, and historians,

however, the Dard/Brogpa unity is hardly disputed now and powerfully shapes Brogpa interpretations of their settlements into Ladakh and their subsequent domination by the Ladakhi kings.⁸

After their migration from Gilgit, “Dards,” it is believed, ruled over large portions of Ladakh at least until the twelfth century when they were pushed out or assimilated by the expanding Western Tibetan rule in the region (Vohra 1989b: 8; see also Kloos 2012). Despite their predominance in Ladakh “just prior to Tibetanization,” it is not entirely clear what events or processes led to their gradual disempowerment and subjugation by the Tibetan kings (Crook 1994: 437). For instance, Crook claims that it is not known whether Tibetan predominance was achieved through intermittent warfare in which Dard populations were eliminated or through “deliberate processes of disculturation” that gradually stripped Dards of their language and culture (ibid.: 437). Notwithstanding their assimilation into the Tibetan kingdom, heroic tales of Dard resistance to the invading kings are legion. For instance, Francke, a Herrnhut missionary who wrote extensively on the Dards in the 1900s, considered Dards to be ferocious warriors. He claimed that it was not “likely that [a] nation whom Herodotus called the most warlike of all Indians, should have given in so easily” ([1907] 1995: 29), a perception he based on the many tales of Dard bravery and resistance. In their battles with the Ladakhi kings, groups of Dards refused help even when they were trapped inside a palace called the *Zalu-khar* without access to any food or water. The most popular narratives of Dards reluctance to assimilation are from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when Ladakh was ruled by the Namgyal dynasty. Rohit Vohra (1989b) recounts in detail the fraught yet complex relationship between the Ladakhi kings and Brogpas at the time.⁹ Although Brogpas voluntarily chose the Ladakhi ruler, Jam-dbyan-rnam-rgyal, over Ali Sher Khan of Baltistan, they never truly renounced their political independence and continued to resist their incorporation into the Ladakhi kingdom.

For instance, Brogpas were fiercely defiant and resisted kings’ decrees to participate in the institution of *khral* (obligatory labor), often choosing heroic death over undignified submission. A sixteenth-century tale of Brogpa resistance to Ladakhi kings is from the village of Hanu, whose intrepid leader Apo Tho-shal refused the king’s orders to build nine bridges, an intransigence for which he was bricked up alive. Despite the king’s brutality, Apo Tho-shal refused to acquiesce to obligatory labor. Realizing that he was up against a brave and fearless people, the Ladakhi king was prepared to acknowledge their royal lineage if Brogpas renounced their language, Brogskad (see Joldan 1985).¹⁰ While Hanupas acquiesced, Brogpas from the remaining three villages refused to capitulate. Indeed, their acts of undaunted courage against oppressive Ladakhi kings made them the icons of heroic resistance. Their heroism, however, also relegated Brogpas to the fringes of Ladakh’s dominant social, political, and economic order. Ladakhi kings and officials compared Brogpa reluctance to do *khral* to that of a dog refusing to be used as a pack animal, an undignified comparison that castigated Brogpas for their rebellion and intransigence. Likewise, several other proverbs popularized by the kings in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries derided

Brogpas as “stubborn” and “untrustworthy.” Brogpas were also likened to an axe precariously hanging from a peg that could hurt and injure people, a comparison that cautioned Ladakhis not to trust Brogpas or treat them with dignity or respect.

While the cultural subordination of Brogpas was critical to extending their ideological influence over a defiant population, both Ladakhi and Balti rulers were equally invested in exerting their control over Brogpa territory. Indeed, as Vohra notes, one of the implications of the war between Ali Sher Khan of Skardu, Baltistan, and Jam-dbyan-mnam-rgyal of Ladakh in the seventeenth century was the division of Brogpas between the rulers of Ladakh and Skardu. The boundary between Ladakh and Baltistan was fixed in the village of Gurgurdho, which literally means a “dividing line,” a line that cut through Brogpas’ villages and separated the Brogpas of Dha, Dartsigs, and Garkone from those of Ganoks in Baltistan (Vohra 1983: 2; 1989b: 8; see map 1).

Although the border in Gurgurdho regulated the relations between Ladakh and Skardu to an extent, it did not constrain existing socio-economic transactions between Brogpas of Dha and Garkone with their counterparts in Ganoks. This arrangement would change dramatically in 1948 after modern sovereign boundaries between Baltistan and Ladakh were erected upon what were once fluid and contingent political demarcations. Undoubtedly, then, the formation of the LoC was a pivotal moment for Brogpas since their day-to-day interactions with the villagers in Ganoks became much harder to sustain and they were reduced to an even smaller minority in Ladakh.

Despite experiencing tumultuous political changes—that first relegated them to the fringes of the Ladakhi kingdom and later confined them to the margins of the postcolonial nation-state—Brogpas are widely believed to have lived “isolated” and “insular” lives.¹¹ The Ladakhi kings, as I previously stated, popularized such stereotypes in the seventeenth century to thwart Brogpa defiance and subdue their trenchant political opposition. However, perceptions of Brogpa intransigence and insularity continue to persist, framing popular and widely held views on Brogpa mannerisms, culture, and lifestyle. Brogpas therefore appear to be “above history and beyond change” (Hutchinson 1996: 21), a perception that has prevented a serious consideration of how Ladakh’s political economy has continually shaped Brogpa lives and created the conditions for their social and political marginality. Yet, Brogpas tell a different story, a story that speaks of historic and mythic connections with places that now exist behind sealed borders; it is a story in which processes of state- and nation-building are integral to the construction of their religious and ethnic identities, and in which Brogpas do not see themselves as a “living museum” waiting to be discovered again and again by “a handful of passionate anthropologists and some adventurous tourists,” allegedly the only entrants “[in] their magic world.”¹²

Brogpas and social change

According to popular folklore, Garkone was settled years after Brogpas established their first village in Dha, soon after their migration from Gilgit in the

seventh century. Located along the banks of the River Indus, Dha was discovered by their chief Gilsinghe who shot an arrow that landed in Ladakh's most fertile territory. The village of Dha, the legend claims, was eventually named after that arrow. To this day, Brogpas remember with gratitude their *lhas* (deities) and ancestors who settled them in places with lush meadows, ample water, and a rich soil, where the altitude and temperature were conducive to the production of two major crops and an abundance of fruit and vegetables.¹³ Based on their extensive settlement stories and folklores, it is clear that Brogpa identities were animated by very specific claims to nature and their deep and mythological connections with place and territory. By articulating a "divine" relationship with their surroundings, Brogpas staked claims to Ladakh in ways that transcended official appropriations of space through maps, boundaries, and districts. Hardly romantic, such connections with "nature" were anchored in their agropastoral mode of production and their routine dependence on their surroundings for food and survival.

Yet, because of the social and political changes of the past few decades that include dramatic changes in the institution of marriage, family, and kinship, agropastoralism is no longer a viable mode of production. Brogpa economy has shifted from agropastoralism to wage labor, and the division of labor that relied on stratifications of age and gender is now obsolete. In the following section, I discuss how Brogpas' transition to private property, monogamy, nuclear families, formal education, wage labor, and their incorporation into a highly militarized economy of soldiering and portering illuminate the complex workings of modernity in a seemingly "out of the way place" (Tsing 1993), where, according to popular perceptions, people "continue to speak their own language and to worship their own Gods, isolated [and sheltered] from the [rest of the] world."¹⁴

Polyandry, romantic love, and agropastoralism

Rohit Vohra's extensive work in the villages of Dha and Garkone in the 1980s and my detailed interviews with older Brogpas provide a useful background to assess how customary forms of marriage among Brogpas supported an agropastoralist mode of production that relied on a mix of subsistence agriculture and livestock rearing.¹⁵ Not unlike other Ladakhis, many different kinds of marital arrangements existed among Brogpas at least until the 1980s, ranging from fraternal polyandry to polygyny to monogamy. Such flexible forms of marriage ensured a complex network of labor-sharing arrangements. In any typical household, thus, while some members stayed in the village to grow buckwheat, barley, and fruit, other members spent part of the year in their pasturelands herding livestock—primarily goats and *dzos*—for milk, butter, clarified butter (*phlem*), meat, manure, and wool. Before India's independence in 1947, older Brogpa men engaged in trade and barter for which they stayed away from their homesteads for extended periods of time; they traveled frequently to Changthang to exchange apricots for salt or to Skardo to obtain cash in order to pay the king's taxes.

Brogpa marital decisions depended on the requirements of household labor and on the availability and access to resources such as farming land and highland

pastures. Since land was scarce, Brogpas, like many Ladakhis, prevented the division of land through an institution called primogeniture, which mandated that only the eldest brother in the family inherited land. This arrangement minimized the division of land and prevented household splits based on multiple claims to land and property. However, by the 1940s, polyandry had come under a series of attacks by the neo-Buddhists from Kashmir who derided Buddhists for indulging in “shameless” acts that “destroyed the lives of [young Ladakhi men]” and substantially skewed Ladakh’s sex ratio in favor of Muslims (Bertelsen 1997a: 143, 144; see also van Beek 2000a: 533; Aggarwal 2004:72). Their denouncement of polyandry culminated eventually in the Buddhist Polyandrous Marriages Prohibition Act of 1941. Notwithstanding such denouncements, instances of polyandry were common among Brogpas until only a generation ago. For instance, Zumba, a 70-year-old Brogpa woman and one of the only two women in the village in a polyandrous marriage, explained why marrying three brothers was fun but also important for sharing work and resources:

Those were different times. We had more than hundred goats and ample land. Having three husbands was *skitpo* [fun]. It was also good because we could share work. Otherwise with that much land and cattle to take care of, it wouldn’t have been possible to work all by myself.

Thus, for Zumba, flexible patterns of marriage enabled Brogpas to share and distribute their work, labor, and resources.¹⁶

Shortly after the prohibition of polyandry in 1941, the neo-Buddhists passed the Ladakh Buddhists’ Succession to Property Act in 1943. The Act declared that every son would be entitled to an equal share of ancestral land and property, a declaration that shifted the dominant social norm from extended families to nuclear households (Bertelsen 1997a: 144). Brogpas recall the slow yet consistent shifts in their marital arrangements, household structures, and land tenure arrangements, shifts that considerably reconfigured Brogpa subjectivities in line with emergent visions of progress and modernity. Such changes have accelerated in the last two decades as opportunities for wage labor and salaried employment become more common. In less than a decade, land holdings per household decreased considerably as the number of households almost tripled from 40 to 120 (see the section on land holdings). Consequently, the division of land among brothers has become exceedingly common, raising questions about the viability of land and its reduced productivity. For instance, Khyentse expressed his concern over what he saw as the endless division of his land and resources: “I have inherited five *kanals*¹⁷ of land from my father. I have to distribute it equally among all my sons. My great-grandsons will be left with nothing.”

Concurrent with shifts in their household structures as well as in their land tenure arrangements were changes in conceptualizations of love and marriage. Romantic love was increasingly becoming the only legitimate basis for marriage even as negotiations regarding the division of labor and resources were not entirely brushed aside. Usually preceded by a phase of courtship in which boys and girls

communicated through romantic notes and letters, elopements have gradually supplanted other forms of marriage among Brogpas (see Ahearn 2001). During my stay in the village, several young couples eloped to a nearby village or town, returning only after their parents agreed to get them married. Although inter-religious marriages were strictly discouraged, families rarely resisted or denied marriages based on differences of class and status (see Gutschow 2006: 484; Smith 2012).¹⁸ In one such instance, the girl's parents tried hard to convince her against marrying into a poorer household with fewer landholdings. Despite their stringent opposition, the couple continued to meet surreptitiously and eventually eloped to Leh.¹⁹

Social injunctions against elopements have weakened considerably in the last decade. Instead, "free" sexual or marital liaisons in which couples were not committed to monogamy were derided. Women were ridiculed, even abandoned, if they slept with men outside their marriage. Thundup, a young Brogpa man, recounted an incident where a woman who slept with her brother-in-law against her husband's wishes got pregnant and was abandoned by her brother-in-law as well as her husband, none of whom wanted to claim her children. Many younger Brogpas thus viewed earlier forms of marriage and sexuality to be "outmoded" and grossly "immoral," representing a "new Ladakhi reality that appealed to the needs of a young generation" (Aggarwal 2004: 73). Instead, elopements were reflective of an emergent modernity in which romantic love and nuclear families were the norm and better aligned with emerging categories of labor, work, and employment.

Restructuring work and labor

Many new categories of wage labor have become popular among Brogpas in the past two to three decades. The most dramatic change occurred in the post-Kargil war period when many young boys began enlisting in the Indian army, ITBF, ITBP, and the SSB.²⁰ Out of a total of 700 men and women in Garkone, 11 boys in the age-set category 13–24 were employed in the army or the SSB in 2003, while many others aspired to join in the future (see Table 1.1).²¹ Motivated by their desire to serve the nation as well as secure a permanent and well-paying job, recruitment in the military increased substantially in the post-war period. A number of recruitment rallies organized by the army and the establishment of the Ladakh Scouts as a full-fledged regiment after the Kargil war made employment in the military more accessible to younger Brogpa men.

Several men were also employed as porters who were paid to carry supplies for the military to their high-altitude border posts. In the post-war period, the Indian army opened up new frontline posts because of which portering became the mainstay of the Brogpa economy. Apart from portering and military recruitment, other sources of income for men included contractual labor (primarily for the Border Roads Organization (BRO)), government jobs as electricians and engineers, and small-scale business jobs in Leh, Kargil, or in the village. Men

Table 1.1 Distribution of occupations in Garkone by age-set categories in 2003 (for men)

Age sets	1-12	13-24	25-36	37-48	49-60	61-72
Only agriculture	0	11	1	2	4	2
Agriculture and portering	0	29	7	3	2	0
Agriculture and other jobs*	1	11	4	5	1	0
Army/SSB	0	11	0	0	0	0
Business	0	3	1	0	3	0
Engineers	0	1	1	1	0	0
Ex-Army	0	1	0	2	2	1
Lama	6	6	0	0	0	0

Source: Bhan census, 2003.

Note: * The Other category here includes: electricians, contractors, contractual labor for the BRO, policemen, home-guards, teachers, carpenters, food and supplies helper, postmen and Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) worker.

Table 1.2 Distribution of occupations in Garkone by age-set categories in 2003 (for women)

Age sets	1-12	13-24	25-36	37-48	49-60	61-72
Only agriculture	1	56	17	6	14	1
Agriculture and portering	0	0	0	0	0	0
Agriculture and other jobs	0	3	0	0	0	0
Army/SSB	0	0	0	0	0	0
Business	0	1	0	0	0	0
Engineers	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ex-Army	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chomo (nuns)	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Bhan census, 2003.

Note: * The Other category here includes: Sadhbhavna adult education teachers and ICDS workers.

preferred wage labor to agriculture or pastoralism, therefore the bulk of agricultural work was highly feminized as Table 1.2 shows. While agricultural tasks had been divided between men and women three generations ago, by 2003, agriculture was predominantly women's occupation. In the age-set category of 37-48, out of a total of 14 men, only one male member contributed to agricultural chores, while out of a total of 19 women, 17 women contributed to agriculture. Most men in this age-set category had taken on portering jobs for the military. The few men who contributed to agricultural chores treated it as their secondary occupation.

For instance, there were three schoolteachers from the village who were, at the time of the census, posted to the middle school in Garkone. They helped with agricultural chores only intermittently, leaving the bulk of the work for their wives or for the recently employed Nepali workers who had migrated to Ladakh in the post-war period, mostly in search of work and employment.

Given such profound changes in their marriage practices as well as in their work and employment categories, herding or pastoralism was no longer a preferred mode of subsistence. The division of extended families into nuclear households and the abolition of polyandry in the 1940s resulted in smaller families who found it impossible to manage the complex economy of agropastoralism. For instance, in my sample of 45 households, the combined population of goats was 466 goats, a miniscule number when compared to the hundreds of goats that households had owned in the past. While the absence of complex labor sharing arrangements was responsible for their reduced livestock, the Kargil war also played a part. Their goats had died either due to heavy shelling in the pasturelands or because they were eaten by the surveillance dogs of the Indian army. Brogpas claimed that Muslim intruders from Pakistan who settled in Brogpa pasturelands ate almost all their *dzos* in 1999. Besides, goats were not considered lucrative since they required intense labor and care and were susceptible to diseases. Many households therefore sold off their goats to purchase donkeys that were used for portering. Only 11 households (out of a total of 45 surveyed) had owned donkeys prior to the Kargil war when prospects for portering were limited to Batalik, the only village where the army had a permanent base since the 1960s. By 2003, the scenario had changed dramatically. Out of a total of 45 households, only nine households did not own donkeys, either because they were *khutu* (older parents who set up their own households) or had a member employed permanently in the government or in the military. In 2003, the total number of donkeys in the village had gone up to 120, as Table 1.3 shows.²²

Another recent trend, as shown in Table 1.1, was that in the age-set categories 1–12 and 13–24, there were six *lamas* (monks) each while there were no *lamas* in any of the other age-set categories. By the late 1990s, because of the increasing influence of the Ladakh Buddhist Association (LBA) in the village, Brogpas were sending their children to monasteries in Dharamshala, Nepal, Banaras, or Arunachal Pradesh for religious training.²³ While sending young boys and girls to train as monks and nuns respectively was a fairly established trend in other communities, it was not all that common among Brogpas until the last decade. Yet, no female child from the village had been sent to a nunnery until 2004.²⁴ Based on their “distinct” religious practices and their “recent” adoption of

Table 1.3 Distribution of livestock in Garkone by households

# Households	Goats	Dzos	Donkeys	Cows
45	466	34	120	6

Source: Bhan census, 2003.

Buddhist rituals, the popular impression among Buddhists in Leh was that Brogpas were “quasi-Buddhists.” Despite the growing influence of the LBA on their religious and legal matters, and their increasing consciousness as “Buddhists,” popular representations of Brogpas as a “quasi-Buddhist” community persisted among Ladakhis, the implications of which I will explore later in this chapter.

Literacy, gender, and household income

A peculiar trend existed among Brogpas as far as statistics for formal education were concerned. Overall, an increasing number of Brogpa boys and girls were going to schools compared to the older generations (Tables 1.4 and 1.5). Yet, a higher percentage of girls in the first two age-set categories were enrolled in schools. This was because several young men from these age-sets were training as

Table 1.4 Percentage distribution of formal education attained through schools, Garkone, 2003 (for men)

<i>Age sets</i>	<i>Standard 1–5</i>	<i>Standard 6–8</i>	<i>Standard 8–10</i>	<i>Standard 11–12</i>	<i>BSc/BA</i>
1–12 (n = 68)	48.52	2.94	0	0	0
13–24 (n = 45)	11.11	11.11	46.66	2.22	6.66
25–36 (n = 38)	10.52	13.15	36.84	0	2.63
37–48 (n = 14)	7.14	14.28	0	0	7.14
49–60 (n = 14)	7.14	7.14	0	0	0
61–72 (n = 10)	0	10	0	0	0
73–84 (n = 3)	0	10	0	0	0

Source: Bhan census, 2003.

Note: n is the total number of men and women in each age-set category.

Table 1.5 Percentage distribution of formal education attained through schools, Garkone, 2003 (for women)

<i>Age sets</i>	<i>Standard 1–5</i>	<i>Standard 6–8</i>	<i>Standard 8–10</i>	<i>Standard 11–12</i>	<i>BSc/BA</i>
1–12 (n = 61)	68.85	4.91	0	0	0
13–24 (n = 55)	12.72	32.72	36.66	3.63	1.81
25–36 (n = 42)	0	11.90	23.80	0	0
37–48 (n = 19)	0	0	0	0	0
49–60 (n = 7)	0	0	0	0	0
61–72 (n = 9)	0	0	0	0	0
73–84 (n = 2)	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Bhan census, 2003.

Note: n is the total number of men and women in each age-set category.

Table 1.6 Approximate annual income in Garkone, 2003

Indian rupees	In US\$ (approx.)	# of households
400,000 and above	8,500	2
200,000 and above	4,500	1
150,000–120,000	3,500–2,500	12
100,000–50,000	2,000–1,000	18
40,000–15,000	850–300	7
< 10,000	< 250	6

Source: Bhan census, 2003.

lamas (monks). Moreover, since military enlistment required education only until the eighth grade, boys usually dropped out of school before finishing high school.²⁵ While enrollment of girls until the eighth grade exceeded that of the boys, their enrollment in the tenth grade was not as high (Table 1.5). Since there was no high school in the village, families reluctantly sent their daughters to Silmoo or Leh. A persistent demand of Brogpas was that their village school be upgraded so that their girls could finish high school.

From Table 1.6, it is clear that annual household income in Garkone averaged US\$2,000. Out of 45 families surveyed, 18 claimed that their annual earnings approximated 50,000 to one-lakh Indian rupees (\$2000). However, as Table 1.6 shows, there were substantial disparities of wealth among households, making questions of class and status predominant features of their contemporary lives. For many Brogpas, without a paid job, an annual income was a meaningless category since agriculture and portering lasted from April until November.²⁶ Households with military recruits or with members working with the government earned an annual income that ranged from an equivalent of US\$4,000 to US\$8,000. One particular household that earned an equivalent of US\$8,000 was not divided into nuclear families, as a result of which their income was substantially higher compared to other households. For a number of households in Garkone, however, their annual or seasonal income was less than an equivalent of US\$1,000. These were households who were either *khutu* or families who owned very little land.

From *nullahs* to borders

As Garkone is located in a narrow river valley gorge nestled amidst tall and rocky mountains, most villagers did not own large and expansive tracts of land inside the village. Until the 1900s, the annual distribution and allocation of land were vested in *pha-spun* groups, a flexible arrangement that allowed land to be “periodically re-divided among households” based on their member strength and their specific needs (Vohra 1989b: 22).²⁷ After the British passed the Land Settlement Act of 1901, land became private property and the flexible land-sharing arrangements were replaced by a rigid system of individual allocations and

entitlements (ibid.). The Ladakh Buddhists' Succession to Property Act in 1943 further fragmented land and other resources as inheritance rights were no longer limited to the oldest son in the household. By the time of my survey in 2003, nuclear households owned very small and scattered strips of land inside the village that did not exceed a total area of 10 *kanals*.²⁸

Most of their land was in the *nullahs*—fertile high-altitude areas located along or close to water sources. A few of the *nullahs* were now accessible after the military constructed tarmac roads to maintain access to their strategic positions on the border. Most *nullahs*, however, were not easily accessible from the village. In 2003–2004, Garkonepas owned land in the Shoray, Ganoks, Dambu, Bararu, Tsinghaza, Yaldor, Jodi, and Chichikamo *nullahs*, although by the 1990s, many Brogpas had abandoned using them for grazing or for agriculture primarily because of scarcity of labor. Before the government banned polyandry, family members took turns in the summer to live in the *nullahs* for extended periods of time. Due to shrinking landholdings in the village, many Brogpas regretted abandoning vast swathes of fertile land that once had produced bountiful harvests of buckwheat and barley. However, the increasing importance of formal schooling and the significance of cash-oriented jobs made it impossible to negotiate the many competing demands for human labor, compelling many Brogpas to abandon their land and resources (see also van Beek 2000a: 538).

Many Brogpas who had not entirely given up farming and herding in their *nullahs* until 2000 were forced to do so after the deployment of the military in the post-war period. According to Brogpas, it was difficult to cultivate their *nullahs* because they were “now the border” with landmines and undisclosed army bases. “How can we do anything there?,” asked a young Brogpa man, who now worked as a porter for the army. Other households gave up their *nullahs* because of frequent shelling by Pakistan. Several Brogpas who continued farming in the *nullahs* did so in the dead of the night when nobody could spot them, hiding underneath big boulders if a shell dropped in their vicinity.²⁹

A detailed discussion of socio-economic transformations among Brogpas illustrates that contrary to popular perceptions, Brogpas were hardly peripheral to the history of premodern and modern state formations. Their social and economic institutions were deeply influenced by the assimilationist politics of the Ladakhi kings in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the colonial policies of land ownership and inheritance, Buddhist injunctions against polyandry and primogeniture in the nineteenth century, and, finally, by their induction into the military as recruits and porters that dramatically transformed their categories of work, especially after the war of 1999. Furthermore, the postcolonial communal politics contributed immensely to Brogpa minoritization as religious and regional divisions in Ladakh became more pronounced over questions of identity, resource allocations, and development (see Aggarwal 2004; Srinivas 1998; van Beek 2001). Brogpa “difference” confounded emergent regional and religious orders, a fact that shaped their relation with Buddhist and Muslim populations of Ladakh as well as their political relations with the districts of Leh and Kargil, a topic I turn to in the next section.

Region, religion, and electoral politics

As mentioned earlier, Jammu and Kashmir has been a disputed territory since India's partition in 1947. The Dogra and British policies imposed a territorial and administrative unity over the disparate provinces of Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh, setting the stage for future religious and regional conflicts. Such conflicts were not the outcome of primordial or irreconcilable cultural and regional differences but the result of fervent state- and nation-building in India's contested frontier state (Aggarwal 2004; Srinivas 1998; van Beek 2001). Over the years, the conflicts within the state became deeply politicized as multiple regional and religious groups staked divergent claims over Jammu and Kashmir's disputed political status. Indeed, the three provinces of Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh harbor deep feelings of apathy and distrust against one another: while Kashmir is criticized for its insurgent politics against India and for stalling the socio-economic development of Jammu and Ladakh through partisan state policies, Jammu and Ladakh's political allegiance to New Delhi has "bred feelings of psychological and political siege among Kashmir's civil society and political leadership" (Talib 2010).

Even within Ladakh, the relationship between Leh and Kargil is strained over questions of representational politics, regional and religious identities, resource allocations, and development. Kargil was carved out of the Leh district in 1979 by the chief minister of the state, Sheikh Abdullah, a decision that many Buddhists claim split Ladakh along religious lines and quelled the Ladakhi (read Buddhist) movement for autonomy from Kashmir (see Behera 2003; see also Aggarwal 2004: 50, 51). Kargilis, however, claim that the division was required for better administrative control and for an equitable distribution of resources between Leh and Kargil. Compared to their counterparts in Leh and Kashmir, Kargilis, a vast majority of whom are Shi'a Muslims, perceive themselves as "remote" and "backward" due to the state government's cold and distant approach towards them.

Despite facing the maximum brunt of ongoing territorial disputes between India and Pakistan since India's partition, Kargilis remained peripheral in India's national consciousness for the longest time, becoming prominent only after India's fourth war with Pakistan in 1999. Scholarly and popular writings on Ladakh also represented it as a predominantly Buddhist space, an image that most profoundly undermined the Muslim-dominated Kargil district. While caricatures of Ladakh portrayed it either as an "abode of *lamas*" or as a place of "virgin" landscapes, Kargil appeared exclusively as a staging post for India's military interventions. Recent scholarship has vigorously questioned dominant narratives that represent Ladakh as a "Buddhist" stronghold without any trace of Muslim presence. These narratives, scholars argue, reaffirm Ladakh's representation as the "Little Tibet" and conveniently erase the influence of Islam on the region's social, architectural, literary, and political landscapes (Aggarwal 2004; Grist 1999; Gupta 2009; van Beek 2000a, 2001).

The political differences between Leh and Kargil deepened in 1989 when the Ladakh Buddhist Association (LBA) formed a "People's Movement for Union Territory status" to demand Ladakh's separation from Kashmir (see Chapter 3).

The LBA's strategy to ensure a Union Territory (UT) status for Ladakh relied on representing Ladakhi Buddhists as the only authentic Ladakhis (van Beek 2000a), a strategic move that maliciously undermined the contributions of Islam to Ladakh's syncretic and complex history (van Beek 1998a, 1999).

As is evident from the preceding discussion, "multiple marginalities" exist side-by-side in a region with a complex tapestry of regional, religious, linguistic, and ethnic differentiations. Clearly, then, experiences of marginality were not limited to Brogpas although their cultural alterity had heightened their sense of exclusion and disenfranchisement. Furthermore, administrative decisions that split their villages between Leh and Kargil reduced them to a miniscule voting bloc in each district. With a combined population of less than 3,000, Brogpas hardly figured in the state's electoral calculus. And, when they did, Brogpas felt deeply torn between the electoral politics of Leh and Kargil.

Brogpa ambiguities related to Ladakh's electoral politics came to the fore during the MP election in 2004 when political candidates from Kargil's political party (National Conference, NC), and Leh's political party (Ladakh Union Territory Front, LUTF), competed vigorously to secure Brogpa votes from Garkone and Dartsigs. Thupstan Tsewang's visit to Garkone in the last week of April, a month before the MP elections were scheduled, was unusual since Brogpas had not figured very prominently in the campaign circuit until that year. However, as the president of the LUTF attempting to garner stronger support for the UT status, Thupstan Tsewang and his supporters extended their campaign to Ladakh's remote villages.³⁰ In order to run an effective campaign in Garkone, Thupstan relied on Tewang Dorje, a well-known Brogpa representative from Hanu and an ardent supporter of the LUTF at the time. Dorje was responsible for rallying Brogpa votes in Thupstan Tsewang's favor. In the meantime, the NC had appointed its own "agents" in the village to campaign for Hassan Khan, Thupstan's primary contender from Kargil. "Garkone had a track record of favoring candidates from Kargil," Tewang told me, "a trend that needed to change." Convinced that he had done sufficient groundwork among Brogpas to tilt their vote in Thupstan's favor, he left after spending an entire day eating and drinking with the villagers. However, Dorje unexpectedly returned the next day after hearing that a bus full of villagers had gone to Kargil to campaign for Hassan Khan. Master Norboo, Tashi, and I were standing by a roadside shop when we saw his car approach the village. Tashi knew what was coming. He reluctantly walked toward the car to convince Dorje that Garkonepas were certainly going to favor Thupstan in this round of elections, but

because they were in Kargil district, at least 20% of their votes needed to go to Hassan Khan. See, even the BJP is trying hard. Recently, the BJP candidate helped one of my relatives. He'd even kept a chicken drumstick for me (*murgein ki taang*). But my vote will still go to Thupstan.

Dorje looked unconvinced. However, his face lit up instantly and he said, "This time you cannot get away since the electronic voting machines will reveal

your voting patterns.” Sensing my increasing discomfort, Dorje justified his remark:

I am not intimidating them. I am just asking for what I deserve. Even though they are not part of my constituency in Leh, I have consistently worked to get their children enrolled in the best schools despite their low scores.

He drove away, upset and angry at being “ditched” once again.

The district division had certainly increased Brogpa vulnerability to the politics of location, religion, and identity, a fact that was markedly brought to the forefront in the 2004 elections in which electronic voting machines (EVMs) were used for the very first time to cast votes electronically. EVMs were also used to track voting trends from different villages, making it even harder for Brogpas to hide their political allegiances. Indeed, Brogpas felt that their miniscule numbers made them the victims of politicking but not necessarily the beneficiaries of development. “You will see all this excitement only during elections. It is only because the LUTF wants a UT for Ladakh that they need us to vote for them.” For Brogpas, rather than upholding the ideals of substantive citizenship, the processes of electoral democracy had crystallized their “minority” status and made them vulnerable to the everyday politics of religion, region, and location.

Mahajan argues how political minorities in a diverse polity like India can become permanent and fixed because democratic processes operate within socially and culturally charged fields, making religious, regional, and ethnic identifications constitutive aspects of Indian democracy instead of its residual elements (1999: 64, 65). For Brogpas, too, their consciousness as a “disenfranchised minority” was not due to their miniscule numbers alone, although it did play a significant part. Brogpas also felt disenfranchised because of their “unique” culture and religion that placed them on the fringes of Ladakh’s sociopolitical order. Despite being a predominant face of Ladakh’s diversity in tourist brochures as well as in state-sponsored tourist festivals, Brogpas spoke passionately about their experiences of discrimination in Leh and Kargil. While in Kargil, a predominantly Muslim district, Brogpas were marginalized for their *bodh* (Buddhist) status, in Leh, it was the stigma of being “quasi” Buddhist that troubled them. Below, I discuss the contexts of their multiple exclusions to explain why Leh and Kargil’s entrenchment in divisive regional and religious politics made it much harder for Brogpas to belong to either district.³¹ I first argue that for Brogpas of Garkone, the perceived “lack” of development in their village was deeply enmeshed with anxieties of religious and ethnic discrimination by Kargil’s predominantly Shi’a Muslim population. Brogpa anxieties, as the next section argues, were material as well as cultural; while rooted in questions of land distribution, resource allocation, and development, their anxieties were also shaped profoundly by the widening gap between Brogpas and their Muslim neighbors in the villages of Batalik and Gurgurtho.

The impossibility of being Brogpa: being “*bodh*” in Kargil³²

The division of Brogpa villages between Leh and Kargil was a popular, often contested, topic of conversation in Dha and Garkone. Villagers on either side of the administrative boundary shared conflicting perceptions about the state of “progress” and “development” in their villages. Although the *nambardars* of Garkone and Dartsigs had opted to stay with Kargil district at the time of the division, many Brogpas lamented the shortsightedness of their leaders. For some in Garkone, differences between Dha and Garkone were too obvious to ignore: while Dha had solar lamps, better schools, and a thriving tourist industry, Garkone lacked a good school, water taps, and a tourist economy. Kargil was often derided as the “*khaini*” (tobacco) district, while Leh was compared to Mumbai because of its well-established tourist economy. Not all Brogpas, however, shared the notion that Leh was “better” than Kargil. For them, Kargil—despite lacking the urban industries and infrastructure of Leh—had provided villagers basic amenities such as a diesel generator, better infrastructure for schools and dispensaries, and a larger number of government jobs. Development in Leh, they claimed, “existed mostly in the marketplace, while in Kargil, development existed in its villages.”

Clearly, then, Brogpas did not have a unanimous preference for a particular district, although their anxieties worsened as conflicts over land, development, and religion intensified. Political lobbyists in Leh who were invested in bringing Brogpas more firmly into the Buddhist fold repeatedly emphasized the disadvantaged position of Brogpas in Garkone and Dartsigs. Some of these perceptions were becoming powerfully entrenched in Garkone as well. Villagers often discussed Kargil’s “clear policy of exclusion and disenfranchisement” toward Brogpas that had, in their view, curtailed their everyday rights, liberties, and freedoms.

For instance, Brogpas rarely sold their vegetables or fresh apricots in the Kargil market, preferring to employ a Muslim agent instead. Shi’a Muslims followed strict rules of purity and pollution (*shirpa*) that proscribed communal eating with non-Muslims. Brogpas rarely ever offered tea, water, or fresh apricots to visiting district officials because wet (*harido*) products were a more potent source of contamination. Instead, they were served only dried apricots and apricot nuts (*ani*) or, for extended stays, officials asked for uncooked rice, hens, and lentils. Brogpas, like other Buddhists in Kargil, also complained about the lack of a *gumpa* (monastery) or an exclusive Buddhist *dharamshala* (an inn) in Kargil (see also Aggarwal 2004: 51). In the winter of 2003, when local teachers from Garkone were sent for extended training to Kargil, their primary concern was to find long-term residence in the town. According to Tsewang, a local schoolteacher, “It is very difficult to find a place to stay in Kargil. Since we are considered *bodh*, people don’t want to rent out houses to us. Living in a hotel is very expensive. That is why I don’t like going to Kargil for extended stays.” Given the history of religious strife between Muslims and Buddhists in Ladakh, it was nearly impossible for Brogpas to purchase land in Kargil. Lanzas, a young Brogpa girl, told me a

story about a Buddhist “who dared to buy land in Kargil and was pelted with stones until he agreed to sell it back to Muslims.” The only Brogpa with a permanent posting in Kargil was Jigmet Namgyal, who had been (at the time of the census) living in and out of rental accommodations for the past 25 years.³³

Such grievances increasingly defined the nascent, yet palpable, boundaries between Brogpas and Shi’a Muslims in Kargil. Perceptions that “somehow funds vanish at Hambuthing-la before reaching us” or that “Kargilis don’t even want us near them because we pollute them” were common and reflected the many ways Brogpas expressed their disgruntlement with the Kargil district.

One of their primary concerns was the Kargil administration’s alleged attempt to discourage Brogpas from cultivating the Dha Thang area, an area not far from the village where most Brogpas owned vast tracts of highly fertile land. For over two decades now, Brogpas had been demanding the construction of a small hydroelectric project on the River Indus since Dha Thang did not receive an adequate supply of water for intensive farming. Given their anxieties about shrinking landholdings in the village and their inability to cultivate their *nullahs*, Brogpas strongly felt that the Dha Thang issue was integrally connected to their survival and quality of life, especially in a context where Brogpas found it difficult to secure permanent and salaried employment with the government. Villagers frequently wrote applications to the government demanding a high school in the village, better water-taps that could survive the frigid winters, and the opening up of Garkone to foreign tourists, a decision that would allow Brogpas to generate alternative sources of income and livelihood like their counterparts in Leh. However, the issue of Dha Thang was one of the more urgent concerns for Brogpas, especially because the administration had abruptly discontinued the hydroelectric project after spending substantial amounts of money on it. Brogpas suspected that the administration was delaying the project on purpose so it could snatch fertile land from Brogpas and gift it to Shi’a Muslims instead. They used the case of Gurgurdho, a hamlet of Garkone where Muslims populations from various villages of Kargil had been resettled by the administration in the 1970s, as a historic precedent to buttress their claims. I discuss the case of Gurgurdho below to explore how the administration’s unwillingness to complete the hydroelectric project in Dha Thang deepened their mistrust toward their Muslim neighbors even though Brogpa anxieties were primarily the outcome of their shrinking land base caused by changing land tenure patterns and the intense militarization of their *nullahs*.

Gurgurdho and the politics of land allocation

Gurgurdho, a hamlet with an estimated population of 750, is situated about 5 miles west of Garkone. As its hamlet, Gurgurdho shares with Garkone its *nambardar* (headman) and also the *panchayat* (village-level governing council). Settled first by Brogpas of Garkone and Dartsigs and later by Muslims who migrated from various parts of Kargil during droughts or other natural calamities, Gurgurdho has a complex and contested history of settlements. Three glacial-fed

water channels or *kuls* feed the highly fertile land in Gurgurdho. Brogpas constructed two of these *kuls* before the 1930s, while two Muslims from Baltistan, Jarropa and Skerchenpa, constructed the last *kul* in 1943. They were eventually gifted five *kanals* of land in return for their promise to convert to Buddhism. According to Norbu, who was narrating this story to me, Jarropa died while constructing the *kul*. But Skerchenpa who survived refused to convert. In the next six years, before Baltistan became a part of Pakistan, six more Muslim families settled in Gurgurdho. By 1971, the Kargil administration had constructed one additional *kul* and relocated Muslim refugees from flood- and drought-prone areas of Kargil to the fertile valley of Gurgurdho.³⁴

Their growing sense of disenfranchisement was the outcome of what Brogpas perceived as an inequitable distribution of land, resources, and development budgets in a predominantly Muslim district. In my conversations with officers and Councillors, many concurred that “enough funds were not being allocated to the entire Batalik region (from Hunderman to Garkone),” because of which the construction of the Dha Thang project was indefinitely stalled. For instance, the development budgets allocated to this region with a population of 9,000 was 30 lakhs, half of what Shigar-Chigtan with the same population received. Yet, many government officials insisted that it was their small population not their religious or cultural difference that justified the smaller allocation of development budgets and resources to Brogpa villages.

Such justifications did not placate Brogpa fears or their everyday experiences of discrimination. Brogpas hardly attributed Kargil’s indifference to their “population.” For them, their social and political marginality was due to profound changes in Kargil’s religious landscape since the 1980s, critical shifts that have eroded the tolerant and inclusive religious practices of Kargili Shiites. After India’s partition, Baltistan, a popular center for religious training was no longer accessible to Kargilis, therefore many young scholars attended religious schools or *makhtabs* in Iran and Iraq. Deeply influenced by the Iranian revolution of 1979, Shi’a clerics returned to Kargil to spread their brand of puritan Islam, one that heavily denounced syncretic religious practices and discouraged Kargilis to participate in music, dance, or theater. Nicola Grist (1998) and Ravina Aggarwal (2004) trace how the new dictates from religious *ullemas* profoundly reconfigured the social and political landscape in Kargil, although such changes were hardly uncontested, they claim. Repressive modes of cultural and religious regulations were deeply resisted by cultural groups who shunned the politics of religious purity in an attempt to reclaim Kargil’s syncretic past (Aggarwal 2004). In private, many Kargilis derided their religious leaders as “imported products” who were “manufactured in Iran” to undermine local language and culture. For instance, Naseeb, a resident of Kargil, lamented how the return of religious clerics from Iran played a significant role in replacing Kargil’s syncretic faith with a rigid version of Islam:

Everybody in Ladakh believed in *bonchos* [religious practices associated with Brogpas]. We worshipped *lhas* and *lhus* [gods and deities], and also

worshipped *Sabdak*, the way Brogpas do now. The clerics who were educated in Iran and Iraq returned and gradually replaced our culture. We had names similar to Buddhists like Tashipa, Wachepa, Singepa, and Rabgyaspa. But now we have very Islamic names such as Saeed, Karbalai, Rizvi, Irfani, Shabani, Kabai, etc.

Naseeb further noted:

It is only in the last four hundred years that Islam has been able to establish its hold in Ladakh. However, the replacement of our local script was not achieved until very late. We can see this through our land records and other documents where the local language was still in use until the late 1600s. So even if Islam had arrived, the script hadn't.

According to Naseeb, the effects of a hardened Islamic ideology were deeply sketched in Kargil's religion, script, and language (see Aggarwal 2004: 202). Religious clerics erased important aspects of Kargil's syncretic past by establishing new social orders that were based on a revised assessment of Ladakhi past and history. Such changes were particularly crucial in furthering divisions among Brogpas, most notably along religious lines. In the section below, I describe how Muslim Brogpas from Batalik, who continued to share kin relations with Buddhist Brogpas from Garkone and Dartsigs, perceived their identities in the context of a hardened Islamic order that undermined their relations with their Buddhist counterparts. Because of new and stringent Islamic regulations, Muslim Brogpas renounced their music, dance, customary attire, and social practices, characteristics that marked Brogpas as "unique" and "authentic" in Ladakh's social landscape. As a consequence, only Buddhist Brogpas had "culture" since they had "battled hard to preserve" it against the sweeping force of religious transformations. Muslim Brogpas, on the contrary, had succumbed to religious pressures and were now deemed to be "a people without culture."

A people without culture

A village 7 miles south of Garkone, Batalik, is a "garrison" village where a population of Brogpa and *Purig* Muslims live in close proximity to a large and heavily fortified military base that was rebuilt in 1999 after it was destroyed by mortar shells from across the border.³⁵ Batalik is where the military fought some of its "fiercest battles during the Kargil war."³⁶ For Brogpas, however, Batalik, like Ganoks, stands testimony to a thriving and intimate network of kin and relatives that once tied Brogpas to places and people beyond Garkone, Dha, and Dartsigs. For instance, Norbu's distant relative, Fatima Bi, whom he lovingly referred to as his "aunt" or *pepe*, lived in Batalik.³⁷ Norbu adored his *pepe* and came to see her often, although these visits were becoming less frequent, he later confessed.

I came to Batalik often to buy meat, vegetables, and cheap petrol from locals who earned a decent income buying it from the army and selling it to civilians

for a small profit. While the shopkeepers knew me well from my frequent visits, I had never visited a Muslim Brogpa family until Norbu planned a trip to his *pepe*'s home one day. I convinced Norbu to take me with him. Fatima Bi opened the door reluctantly when she saw me, an "outsider" she didn't recognize. As we settled for some tea, Fatima Bi narrated a recent tale of a young boy who had posed as a porter but turned out to be a Pakistani spy. Since the conversation was in Brogskad (a language Muslim and Buddhist Brogpas share), I interjected, trying hard to assure her that I was only a researcher interested in the study of Brogpa culture and language. On hearing me speak in Brogskad, she burst out laughing and glanced at Norbu approvingly. "I see . . . I can trust her. She wants to get married here." Fatima Bi's spontaneous laughter was comforting, an expression of acceptance in a society where people were still haunted by the specter of the Kargil war and where the military's panoptic closely surveilled their everyday social routines and interactions. Fatima Bi's initial reluctance to talk was also due to religious divisions that now separated Fatima Bi and Norbu. In a context where relations between Buddhists and Muslims were strained, not many people wanted to recount a past that challenged deeply entrenched perceptions of their primordial and timeless religious identities. In some ways, the story of Batalik was no different from the many narratives that Ravina Aggarwal painstakingly documents in her ethnography in which anthropologists working in "Inner Line villages" are expected to counter existing misperceptions of a syncretic religious past by "chronicling" people's "true" and "authentic" histories (Aggarwal 2004: 90). Yet, "expressions of plurality appear in fragments" (ibid.: 18) through stories and memories that defy hegemonic frameworks of history, temporality, and identity. After her initial reluctance to recount her past, Fatima Bi's forthrightness was exemplary; instead of reinterpreting the past through the optic of strained religious relations, she chose to celebrate the shared bond of language, culture, and ancestors that inexorably bound her with Norbu and her kin in Garkone and Dartsigs (see also Srinivas 1998).

Soon after tea, Fatima Bi took us to see Mariam Bi, one of the oldest Brogpa women in Batalik. Together, Fatima and Mariam Bi recounted their stories from the times when they could freely eat and dance with Buddhist Brogpas:

In the past, even we danced in village festivals (*starmo*) just like Buddhist Brogpas do now. Those days there used to be a *changra* in Chulichen. I remember. Above my natal house in Chulichen, there is Khannakpa's house. It is still called *changra*. Long, long time back, there used to be dancing and singing on this *changra*. Not any more.

Changras where villagers gathered to celebrate their music and dance festivals no longer existed in Batalik. Hardly apolitical, the recreation of landscapes through religious sanctions was a deeply ideological move to erase sites that once had celebrated Ladakh's historic plurality and difference. Defying such attempts, Fatima Bi enthusiastically remembered the times when dancing and singing were integral aspects of their existence and not derided by clerics as being "*haraam*" or

“un-Islamic.” While Fatima Bi recalled her passion for dance, Miriam Bi was shy and reticent, not entirely certain whether “she ever possessed Fatima Bi’s talents.” Despite lapses of time and memory, and my perpetual struggle to work with what were essentially “fragments of [their] collective memories” (Kabir 2009: 174), Fatima and Miriam Bi managed to reconstruct a distinct picture of a bygone past in which Muslim and Buddhist Brogpas were bound through a rich and complex array of rituals, marriage, and kinship. To reinforce her point further, Fatima Bi turned to Norbo and said:

We are basically (*bunayadi*) the same. Only our cup and bowl (*pati-koti*) are different now. Our God is the same but our religions (*chos*) are different. We eat beef, you don’t. You eat dead animals (*muldar*) and drink *chang*. We don’t. These are the only differences really.

Fatima Bi insisted that the differences between Buddhist and Muslim were superficial and historic, not innate or primordial. Yet, these seemingly innocuous differences had significantly eroded relations of community and solidarity between Buddhist and Muslim Brogpas. Strict regulations against intermarriage and interdining had reduced avenues for meetings and socialization. Even Fatima Bi could only recall a handful of marriages between Muslim and Buddhist Brogpas in the last decade and none in recent years. Furthermore, Muslims preferred not to eat with Buddhists who “drank *chang*” and ate meat that was not slaughtered according to Islamic tenets. Fatima Bi’s comment that their “cup and bowl” were different now pointed to how the rules of *shirpa* had introduced strict religious sanctions against communal eating and minimized their mutual participation in rituals and weddings.

Furthermore, relationships of labor sharing and dependence that tied Muslims of Batalik and Chulichen with their counterparts in Garkone and Dartsigs no longer existed, in large part due to the ready availability of government-subsidized staple foods through the public distribution system (PDS). Fatima Bi explained to me that it was impossible to follow rules of *shirpa* in the past when Muslims of Batalik and Chulichen relied on Brogpas of Garkone and Dartsigs for food and livelihood. According to Fatima Bi:

Those days were tough because there was very little food. Most Garkonepas and Dartsigspas had ample land. They always needed the extra labor that we provided. We used to get one *bere* (a small tin can) of barley (*gono*) in return for our labor.

The ration depots that were established in Ladakh after India’s independence increased people’s reliance on the government while disrupting communitarian relations across social and religious groups (see van Beek 2000a: 538).³⁸ According to Gandup dudo, a 75-year-old Brogpa elder and the ex-*nambardar* of Garkone, “ration depots made lives easier and comfortable, but they also changed hearts.” Muslims who “used to eat in with us no longer do because they don’t depend on

us for food or work.” A handful of Muslim families who lived in Garkone moved to Batalik or Gurgurdho as customary food and labor-sharing arrangements between Buddhists and Muslim households were disrupted. Consequently, Garkone, where the two religious communities lived together, even if in unequal relations of labor and patronage, became predominantly Buddhist. Portions of land that Muslims owned in Garkone were traded for land in Batalik or Gurgurdho, although such transactions were not always uncontested. Unlike Fatima Bi or Norbu, younger Brogpa men and women increasingly see these events in light of recent religious conflicts between Buddhists and Muslims because of which, as Martijn van Beek rightly claims, the younger generations in Ladakh “take their communalism much more seriously” (2001: 544).

The preceding discussion demonstrates that Brogpa perceptions of marginality and exclusion from Kargil make sense within a long history of disputes over land and resources, the emergence of a highly politicized Islam, and religious sanctions of purity and pollution that regulated their everyday interactions with their Muslim neighbors. Brogpas felt ignored and even castigated for being *bodh* or Buddhist in a district that was predominantly Muslim, and where religion had become a key aspect of people’s social and political identities. The impossibility of being Brogpa in a district where their “readiness to drink and dance” and “have fun (*skitpo*)” defied notions of Islamic piety and propriety was clear to many who claimed that they could never “truly belong to Kargil.”

Being *bodh*, however, was not the only basis of their marginality. Brogpas were ridiculed for not “being Buddhist enough” or being quasi-Buddhists in Leh, a predominantly Buddhist district. Their unique identities, attributed to their exotic cultural, ritual, and religious practices, destabilized the religious order endorsed by the LBA since the 1980s (see Aggarwal 2004; Gutschow 2004; van Beek 2000a). Powerful narratives of Brogpa difference that focused overwhelmingly on their “distinct” religious and cultural characteristics had tangible consequences for Brogpas who were widely regarded as quasi-Buddhists, inchoate religious subjects who did not fully subscribe to the tenets of a pure and authentic Buddhism.

Being quasi-Buddhist in Leh

Himalayan Buddhism, Gutschow claims, is viewed either as a “corrupted or less authentic version” of Tibetan Buddhism or is considered “more shamanic and less civilized” compared to its variants in the rest of India (2004:10). Misperceptions of inauthenticity can serve as ideological tools to fuel anxieties about the lack of religious rigor and discipline in a context where religion is deeply associated with partisan state policies, resource allocations, and the carving up of administrative and district boundaries. In Ladakh, such anxieties culminated in extensive social reforms initiated by the LBA in the 1990s to “restore” Buddhism’s “original and pristine purity” and cleanse it of “aberrant” practices, such as polyandry, alcohol consumption, and spirit and ancestor worship (ibid.: 34). These efforts gained steam particularly after the LBA initiated the social boycott against Muslims, creating a deeply fractured society in which local customs that flouted “true”

Buddhist precepts were strongly discouraged (Aggarwal 2004). Critical to the LBA's attempt to reinvent Ladakh as a place of "pristine" Buddhism was the categorization of certain communities as "inauthentic" or "impure" so most Ladakhis could be portrayed as "true" Buddhists. Ladakhis consolidated a purer Buddhist identity by relegating Brogpas to the status of the "corrupted" or "quasi" Buddhist. Already on the margins of Ladakhi social life, Brogpas became Ladakh's quintessential primitives, a people without any defined religion or morality who now posed a threat to Ladakh's pure Buddhist order. This perception, as I will later argue, was also deeply embedded in and shaped by notions of Brogpa racial alterity; indeed, Brogpa "cultural" and "religious" practices were considered natural and immutable extensions of their racial difference. In the following section, I discuss how and why Buddhists in Leh considered Brogpas to be "quasi-Buddhists"; while based on widespread perceptions of Brogpa reluctance to engage with "outsiders" due to strict rules of purity and pollution, such stereotypes also relied on a popular belief that Brogpas, more than other communities in Ladakh, believed in indigenous spirit cults (*lhas* or *lhus*)—inferior gods—who demanded and condoned animal sacrifice.

Brogpas, like their neighbors in the villages of Skurbuchen and Achinathang, were introduced to Buddhism in the 1800s through the teachings of Meme Samphel, an ascetic who brought with him a scriptural and textual knowledge of Buddhism (see Aggarwal 2004: 63). Many believe that Brogpas were reluctant to convert due to their fierce resistance to Ladakhi kings and their determined attempt to oppose Ladakhi religious and political order. For instance, in the sixteenth century, Singge Namgyal sent many of his emissaries to Garkone as part of *khral* or mandatory labor to teach the recalcitrant locals a "Buddhist way of life."³⁹ Onpo dudo recalled how his grandfather, Onpo Paljor, had come to Garkone from Tya-stismogang in the sixteenth century to practice Tibetan folk medicine; although he helped Brogpas cope with illness and disease, his main task was to teach and spread Buddhism among Brogpas. At the time, Brogpas had no defined knowledge of Buddhist texts or praxis: they "did what they pleased with their dead, sometimes the bodies were thrown into the river and at other times, Brogpas buried them like Muslims."

Buddhist outsiders were shunned as *sapas*, king's emissaries who, under the pretext of helping Brogpas, were determined to disrupt their customary way of life.⁴⁰ Brogpas strictly followed rules of purity and pollution (*chitu-seecho*) and outsiders, both Buddhists and Muslims, were forbidden to enter their homes until they were thoroughly cleansed with juniper smoke. Although distinctions between Brogpas and *sapas* are now hardly discernible, *khaas* or "pure" Brogpas to this day begrudgingly claim that *sapas* have a cloying tongue with a dirty heart (*sapas oozi narmo, huo chutu*). While restrictions over intermarriage and interdining no longer exist, villagers identified as *sapas* are still discouraged from visiting the *Deiüha* (Brogpa shrine) on festivals such as *Lhogsar* and *bono-nah* or being cremated in the same spot as Brogpas. However, rules of *chitu-seecho* are only ritually significant now and are not enforced on a day-to-day basis. Indeed, many Brogpas strongly identify as "Buddhist," proclaiming their faith through everyday

acts of rotating their prayer wheels, abstaining from meat and alcohol, and organizing regular pilgrimages to Buddhist sites in Phyang, Nepal, Sarnath, Dehradun, and Dharamshala. Despite massive shifts in their religious practices, perceptions of Brogpa reluctance toward Buddhism persist in mainstream imaginary, fueling stereotypes about Brogpas' "unwillingness" to accommodate outsiders. For instance, a prominent Buddhist writer from Leh recalled an incident from 30 years ago when he was denied entry into a Brogpa homestead because Ladakhis drank *bhamar* (cow milk) that Brogpas considered to be a potent source of impurity and pollution. He was also forbidden to use their water streams for cleaning and washing; instead, to avoid angering their deities, Brogpas brought him a separate bucket of water (see also Vohra 1989b: 55). Perceptions that Brogpas reject outsiders are widespread, reinforced primarily by popular and scholarly accounts that treat Brogpas as a "closed" ethnic group who subscribe to the rigid rules of *chitu* and *seecho*, categories that can be roughly (and sometimes misleadingly) translated as the English variants of purity and pollution.

For instance, in his extensive work on Brogpa society and religion in the 1970s and 1980s, Rohit Vohra discusses the centrality of the concepts of "purity" and "pollution" to Brogpa conceptualizations of social and ritual order. He describes how:

Purity is an attribute of the environment in that all higher regions above the settlement are pure, i.e., the mountains, the pasture grounds, lakes, glaciers and the streams taking their origin from the icy waters in these regions. There are certain trees, flowers, and animals which inhabit these higher regions, and even colors, which are the symbols of purity.

(Vohra 1989b: 52)

Subscribing to what Wynne Maggi calls the "altitude hypothesis," Vohra takes a very static view of Brogpa cosmology, attributing "purity" to high altitude places such as mountains and glaciers while considering low-lying places in Garkone and Dha to be inherently impure.⁴¹ Although he treats "ecology" as an unchanging realm of human life, he states that human attributes of purity and impurity are indeed relational, incumbent on age, lineage, gender, as well as the quality of human action. So, for instance, higher purity, he argues, is achieved when old Brogpa men and women complete six *loskor* cycles or when they participate in "brave" or charitable deeds such as organizing the Feasts of Merit (Vohra 1989b: 54).

Yet, despite his insistence on their fluidity, Vohra treats the origin of the boundaries between the pure and impure as ahistoric cultural attributes, unresponsive to the hostile and tumultuous relations between Brogpas and Ladakhi kings. Contemporary scholars of Ladakh have outlined the need to view "pollution and purity" as dynamic social and cultural categories that are profoundly shaped by Ladakh's complex political and economic history (Gutschow 2004: 200). Therefore, instead of treating Brogpa compulsions to maintain purity to be an aspect of "their closed belief system" (Vohra 1989b: 55), we must treat their social

boundaries as “expressive and instrumental maps” to track deeply embedded social, political, and historic anxieties (Gutschow 2004: 199).

From their oral history accounts, it is clear that outsiders were not always shunned or excluded by Brogpas. Both Muslim and Buddhist outsiders were granted rights of residence in exchange for their commitment to do *khral* or obligatory communal work for the village. Their flexible labor arrangements ensured that Brogpas were hardly a closed ethnic group; instead, many Muslim and Buddhist families such as Madipa and Onpopa who migrated into Garkone settled there permanently, declaring their allegiance to the village by participating in obligatory forms of communal labor. Yet, exaggerated stereotypes of Brogpa insularity and cultural exclusion dominate popular and political discourses to justify their continued marginality in Ladakh’s political and social spheres.

Gods, sex, and social control

Instead of foregrounding shared or plural histories, Brogpas, too, asserted that their language, culture, and social institutions were remarkably different from those of other Ladakhis. While not completely inaccurate, their heightened sense of difference was not the result of Brogpa insularity or isolation, but the outcome of their close, yet cautious, interactions with Ladakhis. Tashi Norphel, an elder Brogpa from the BrukTspringpa household, explained to me how, unlike Buddhists, Brogpas did not subscribe to the caste system that was so integral to Ladakhi society:

We have no Mons, no Garbhas. There are five or six different types of castes in Leh, Garzat, Monzat, etc. But in Brogyul there is nothing like that. We follow our *chitu-seecho* rules but we don’t have a caste system in the village.

In a society where “everyone likes to sing and dance,” social and occupational distinctions that treat musicians as a separate caste are untenable, Norphel claimed. Because caste distinctions were so marked among Ladakhis, Brogpas often complained of being mistreated as “*mons*” or “*garbhas*” because of their “fondness for music and dance.”

In addition to rejecting distinctions of caste and status, Brogpas followed an independent religious and ritual calendar. Instead of celebrating *Lhogsar* on a designated day with other Ladakhis, Brogpas picked the most auspicious day each winter.

We do not designate one particular day for celebrating *Lhogsar* because it does not afford us any flexibility. For instance, we cannot celebrate *Lhogsar* within four days of a birth or death in the village, so if we designate one day for *Lhogsar*, we might have to cancel the festival altogether because of the pollution accrued through *bambak* and *rubak*.

In his reflections on their ritual and religious differences, Norphel dudo emphasized how Brogpa religious lives were not structured by any particular *chos* or religious

scriptures; according to him, their religion was the product of “human action,” their *marzi* or will, and was not based on the teachings of a *sangyas* or religious figure. “We worship the *Sabdak*, we worship our hearth. That is why we are different from Ladakhis.”

Notwithstanding such sweeping assertions of difference, it was increasingly clear that Brogpas could no longer follow their *marzi* or “will” in important religious and ceremonial matters. Indeed, directives by the LBA to renounce rituals that offended Buddhist sensibilities were taken seriously by many Brogpas who refused to subscribe to their customary religious practices, especially those that involved the sacrifice or consumption of meat and alcohol. Thus, Norphel dudo’s claims of Brogpa “exclusivity” could hardly erase the imprints of powerful external forces that had profoundly changed notions of Brogpa religiosity in the past few decades. For instance, a controversy that erupted in the village in 2003 during the *Lhogsar* celebrations illuminates how Brogpas were deeply divided over questions of religion and custom.

Brogpas were customarily required to sacrifice a goat during the *Lhogsar* celebrations to propitiate their *lhas* and earn their favors. Khyentse, who was now a devout Buddhist, a strict vegetarian, and a teetotaler, refused to contribute the sacrificial goat despite his turn (*bari*) to do so. I was sitting in Khyentse’s house along with Councillor Dawa, who had just arrived from Leh to visit family in Garkone. The *grongpen* (village messenger), looking visibly impatient and agitated, also entered Khyentse’s room at the same time. As soon as Khyentse saw the *grongpen*, he turned to Dawa and told him rather sternly: “After your return to Leh, you must inform the LBA that Brogpas have not given up violence against animals.” Turning to the *grongpen*, Khyentse said, “Don’t you know what *Rinpochejee* said the other day? If you want to eat meat, eat beef (*basha*) instead of goat-meat. That way you will only kill one animal.” The shocked *grongpen* left without saying a word. Khyentse’s response generated immense ire in the village. Brogpas who considered cows and their products polluting to their deities were upset that Khyentse could say such a thing and challenge the very basis of Brogpa world-view and religiosity. Although most Brogpas now used cow products like milk and butter in their newly constructed homes, hardly any Brogpa ate beef inside the village since it deeply angered their *lhas* and deities.⁴² Indeed, eating *basha* was held in disdain, a practice for which both Buddhists and Muslims were deeply ridiculed. Clearly, then, Khyentse’s remark reflected the growing inability of Brogpas to maintain “legal and juridical autonomy” (Pirie 2006) in the face of the rising politicization of Brogpa “liminality” and the growing authority of the LBA in Ladakh. Khyentse’s remark also reflected the everyday predicaments Brogpas experienced in reconciling their “customary” practices with the LBA’s vision of an “authentic” Buddhism. Despite such predicaments, Brogpas willingly embraced new religious practices and institutions even as they continued to worship their *lhas* and local deities. For instance, as already mentioned, Brogpa households had begun sending their children to monasteries to train as monks; in fact, there were two young boys from Garkone who were already trained as *lamas* while there was a senior *lama* from the village of Dha; moreover, villagers had

recently accrued funds to construct a *gumpa* in the village so that they could invite senior *lamas* and *rinpoches* for extended stays in the village; three *mane tungchurs* were installed in Garkone in the 1990s so people could earn religious merit; a cement stupa was also erected in the village; and the influence of transnational networks of Buddhist patronage and sponsorships was also growing as Brogpas rallied for international funding for local schools.

Notwithstanding such profound shifts, stereotypes of Brogpa reluctance to renounce their religion and way of life were far too common. For instance, a prominent religious leader from Leh, Tsring Samphel, claimed that “Brogpas continue to worship their own *lhas* and *lhus* [deities] such as *Shiringmolamo*, *Stangasalamo*, and *Banjo Zangbi da lichen*. They also worshipped *skein* [ibex horns] since these were considered to be *lha*’s vehicle.” Despite their widespread prevalence as significant components of village cosmologies in contemporary Ladakh, indigenous spirit-cults were most frequently associated with Brogpas, who were viewed as “nominal Buddhists” or as the living fossils of a pre-Buddhist past.⁴³ Brogpas, more than others, worshipped “inferior” beings, a practice that, according to Tsring Samphel, distracted them from a “purer and more enlightened *dharma*.” The fact that Brogpas were “satisfied with their own way of life was certainly a dark aspect of their existence.” Furthermore, in his view, Brogpas, like other communities in Ladakh, were “confused” about the distinctions between Buddhism and *Bonchos*. *Lhas*, he argued, were “family gods, inferior even to human beings. They could only sustain us in our day-to-day survival.” For him, since Brogpas had ample respect for *lamas* and *rinpoches*, they “were at par with other Buddhist communities, although their attitude toward *lhas*” needed to change.

Of the several religious practices that came under attack by the LBA, the primary ones were worshipping of the *sabdak* and offering animal sacrifices to appease it. Placed near the hearth of each household, Brogpas strictly followed certain rituals and taboos to propitiate the *sabdak*, the protector of their households and their strongest village deity. For instance, while the *sabdak* enjoyed goat meat and alcohol, chickens, eggs and beef offended him. Since almost everybody in the village, barring a few older Brogpas, consumed these food products, *sabdak* was mostly retained in their old homes and not installed in their newly constructed houses.

Apart from their “dogged and persistent” beliefs in their gods and deities, the LBA also ridiculed Brogpas for their licentious sexual behavior. Heavily stereotyped for “kissing” in public and displaying their unbridled sexualities, Brogpas were popularly portrayed as a people with an abundant sexual appetite, a community that was capable of transgressing normative rules of sexual conduct and propriety. Such perceptions were popularized through countless travel accounts such as the one by HPS Ahluwalia, an army major, who portrayed their week-long harvest festival as a sexual orgy in which Brogpa men ate “the best food” and made “love with many women in gay abandon” (Ahluwalia 1980: 113).

Feminist scholars have long argued how the “discursive construction of otherness is achieved simultaneously through sexual and cultural modes of differentiation” (Yeğenoğlu 1998: 2). Perceptions of heightened sexuality often

operate as a fundamental way to justify an irreconcilable otherness. Brogpa cultural exclusivity in Ladakh, too, was justified through persistent allusions to their highly sexualized conduct, which, according to many Buddhist leaders, flouted Buddhist norms of modesty and sexual reserve. However, Brogpa sexual licentiousness was not just an assault on Buddhist modesty; in a scenario where sexual transgressions had assumed religious undertones, Brogpa conduct was interpreted as a fundamental threat to the Buddhist sexual order. For instance, a prominent religious leader told me how:

[He] was carrying out a social reform in the 1970s where I made them aware about the disadvantages of some of their cultural aspects such as kissing openly during the *bono-nah* [the harvest festival]. I told them that it was because they gave the Kargilis an impression of being free that one of their most beautiful girls was raped by a Kargili home-guard.

That Brogpa conduct encouraged “rapes” and “assault” from Muslim outsiders was used to justify how Brogpas were responsible for exacerbating Buddhist vulnerability to sexual transgressions, a threat that the LBA had partially curbed by regulating and monitoring Buddhist women’s “desires” and their marital and reproductive choices (Smith 2011). Yet, according to the religious leader, Brogpa sexualities remained raw and untamed, threatening the contained and highly regulated sexual conduct of other Buddhists.

Clearly, then, Brogpas had changed but not enough to be considered “fully” Buddhists; their faith was still nascent, straddling the lowly world of *lhas* and *lhus* and the transcendental teachings of Buddhism. And their sexualities were transgressive, refusing to follow the social diktats of sexual order and containment. According to a prominent religious leader, Brogpas were too “stubborn” and “proud” to follow their religious and community leaders, an “intrinsic cultural characteristic” that had prevented Brogpas from forging alliances and “interacting deeply” with other Buddhists. Based on such perceptions, Brogpas were popularly labeled *tamchik*, a label that carried multiple significations depending on how the term was deployed. It could conjure either Brogpa “stubbornness” and “rigidity” or their “naïveté” and “ignorance.” Commenting on their behavioral characteristics, the religious leader noted:

It is easy to befriend them because they are so simple. However, they can be extremely short-tempered because of which they are believed to have committed murders in the past. On a deeper analysis, they are good people, but because of their thoughtless actions, they can even murder at times.

Brogpas were Ladakh’s “noble savages;” their “simple” yet short-tempered nature and violent streak made them unpredictable, and, at times, “thoughtless”; in describing his perceptions about Brogpas, the religious leader oscillated between protective paternalism and downright abhorrence, sentiments that emanated from the profound reification of Brogpa sexual and religious difference in Ladakh.

Perceptions of Brogpa difference, however, were not just social or symbolic; they were also firmly rooted in constructions of race and Brogpa physicality as integral signifiers of Brogpa alterity. That Brogpas had “blonde hair, blue eyes, and fair skin,” and their “noses were long and pointed,” were used as evidence of why Brogpa difference was not just cultural, but also embodied and organic. Unlike the dominant “Mongoloid” population of Ladakh who were snubbed as “Gorkhas” or “Chinkis” in India (Aggarwal 2004: 12), Brogpas were touted as the “descendants of [the] pure Aryan race” or “the last inheritors of Aryan, pre-Aryan and Neolithic traditions.”⁴⁴ Such explanations of Brogpa or Dards’ physicality and distinction are legion, reinforced through countless articles, anecdotes, travelogues, and documentaries that portray them repeatedly as Ladakh’s “pure-blooded Aryans.” In the last section of this chapter, I unpack how Brogpas attained this status and the ways in which race works to reinforce cultural narratives of Brogpa difference and alterity in contemporary Ladakh.

Race, culture, and aryanism

In a *Times* magazine article (1984), the tagline, “An anthropologist finds a living stone-age museum,” is hardly surprising, given popular perceptions of Brogpas as an “archaic community,” passionately holding onto remnants of a past culture and religion. Yet, what is striking about this article is the authority vested in Michel Peissel, a business student from France who is given the dubious status of an anthropologist, mostly on the basis of his research in the “no man’s land of a legendary tribe known as the Minaro”—a label often used interchangeably with Brogpa or Dard. Here, I want to focus on Peissel’s claims that have a direct relevance for understanding Brogpa racial alterity in Ladakh and the near-obsession of ethnographers, travelers, and journalists with the enduring question of “Aryanness” and its multiple iterations in India and abroad. “Peissel is convinced that the Minaro are Aryans,” the article claims, although Peissel’s writings, the article further notes, “hardly evoke the image of an Asian master race.” While it is not entirely clear what the “Asian master race” is supposed to look like, what is remarkably clear is that a rural, pastoral setting where people “live in adobe huts and raise sheep and goats” is certainly not what Aryanness conjures in the author’s mind.⁴⁵ Yet, the image of an itinerant shepherd who continues to live in a “primitive” state even with his “curiously European features, a light complexion and a sharp, high-cheek face” persists, confounding travelers and researchers, journalists and geneticists who continue to seek definitive answers to what are essentially “elusive” and “ahistoric” questions.

The question of the Aryan identity in India became prominent in the nineteenth century, mostly through the work of William Jones, a Company Orientalist, who traced commonalities between European and Indian histories based on his comparative study of Greek, Latin, and Sanskrit. In her extensive study of Aryanism in India, Thapar argues how “the slippage between speech and biology” dominated the nineteenth-century political landscape in India (2008: 28). Company Orientalists, smitten by the great antiquity of the Indian civilization,

argued that the common ancestry between Sanskrit, Greek, Latin and Persian could also be extended to its speakers (*ibid.*: 28). This phase of “British enthusiasm for India” or what Trautman identifies as “Indomania” continued from the eighteenth century through the early nineteenth century. It was soon replaced by a period of “Indophobia,” in which earlier colonial scholarship was discredited because of changing Christian attitudes to colonialism. Yet, Indomania did not end without leaving its powerful traces on the association between race and language or, more specifically, on how Brogpa identity continued to be imagined and understood long after the first British officials stepped foot in the Northwestern Himalayas in the early nineteenth century.⁴⁶

The British moved into the Indus river basin and adjoining areas as part of their “forward policy” to establish a “secure frontier” against Russian advances (Clarke 1977: 325). Such attempts coincided with an overwhelming attention to the languages and people of the Hindukush and the Northwestern Himalayas, an area that came to be loosely identified as Dardistan, after a Hungarian linguist, G.W. Leitner coined the term in 1866 (*ibid.*: 325). To Leitner, Dardistan was “the cradle of the Aryan race,” and an area that contained “solution[s] to numerous linguistic and ethnographical problems of the time” ([1890] 1996: 256):

As is the case with uncivilized races generally, the Dards have no name in common, but call each Dard tribe that inhabits a different valley by a different name. The name “Dard” itself was not claimed by any of the race I met. If asked whether they were “Dards” they said “certainly,” thinking I mispronounced the word “dade” of the Hill Panjabi which means “wild,” “independent” . . . the country is differently known as Taghistan, Kohistan, and since my visit in 1866 as “Dardistan,” a name, which I see, Mr. Hayward has adopted.

(Leitner 1893: 168)⁴⁷

Despite being a “non-existent country” (Clarke 1977: 325), Leitner’s Dardistan, Mock argues, was “the basis for the classification of the languages in the north-west of the Indo-Aryan (IA) linguistic area (which includes present-day Afghanistan, northern Pakistan, and Kashmir).”⁴⁸ Indeed, in the 1900s, scholars classified Dardic as a distinct group of Aryan languages “that were spoken in [the] mountainous tract between the Hindukush and the frontiers of India proper” (Grierson 1919: 1, cited in Mock 1997).⁴⁹

Thus, Leitner had successfully managed to impose a geographic and linguistic unity on what were “essentially several races that [spoke] distinct languages” and also “differ[ed] considerably amongst themselves” (Biddulph [1880] 2001: 8, 9). Yet, his pursuit did not end there. Leitner had invented a nation, Friese (2000) notes, in his acerbic piece on Aryanism and its multiple, yet contradictory, constructions in contemporary Ladakh. As such, the invention of Dardistan was driven by the “colonial fantasy” of creating new territories to “[fill unknown] blank[s] in the map” (Friese 2000). But such fantasies also came laced with distinct racial imaginaries. So, for Leitner, Dards had many racial characteristics

that set them apart from non-Dardic populations of the Tibetan Baltis and the Pathans in Afghanistan (*Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladakh*, 1890, cited in Clarke 1977: 329).

The stature of Dards was “slender” and “wiry,” a favorable adaptation for life in the mountains, Leitner argued. The “pure Shin,” to Leitner, “look[ed] more like a European than any high-caste Brahmin of India” ([1890] 1996: 62). A more definitive statement that further reinforced Leitner’s preliminary conclusion about the distinct racial and linguistic identities of the Dards came from Frederic Drew, a British geologist and a colonial officer in the Maharaja’s office in Kashmir. For Drew, based on “their language [and] physiognomy,” it was “inevitable that the Dards [were] an Aryan race” (1875: 423). Dards were “broad-shouldered, moderately stout-built, well-proportioned men.” Although not “handsome, Dards [had] a rather good caste of countenance” (ibid.: 424).

Along with delineating their physical features, Drew also commented on their behavioral characteristics, pointing to the unusual strength of their character: Dards “stand up against oppression as long as possible,” he claimed (ibid.: 424). While Dards were mostly “Mohammedan” (ibid.: 429), Drew calls Buddhist Dards an “outlying portion of the Dard race,” who despite their Buddhist faith are considered “one in origin” with Muslim Dards because of “many circumstances of language and manners” (ibid.: 430).

As I argued earlier, contemporary scholars have debated endlessly about the validity of using “Dardic” as a linguistic category, some even arguing that the term should be completely “jettisoned.”⁵⁰ Yet the uncritical translation of an imaginary linguistic unity into a homogenous racial category continues unabated, driving much of what passes as serious scholarship on Brogpas. For instance, Michel Peissel, the self-proclaimed anthropologist, in order to prove his theory that the Minaro indeed are “the last inheritors of Aryan traditions,” goes “beyond the physical and cultural clues” to their “Minaro language—an archaic Indo-Aryan dialect called Shina, which contains a number of words that resemble those of modern European languages.”⁵¹

Undoubtedly then, the “racialist mythography” (Linke 1997: 561) has attained the dubious status of history as colonial schemes of difference are reinforced by their uncritical use in contemporary scholarship. Brogpas, too, claim that they are “Aryans”—“people with a long nose, high cheek-bones, and ample body hair,” stereotypes around which an entire tourist economy is built. Needless to say, such perceptions have not only infused Brogpa sense of identity and history, but also allowed race to become a valid framework to understand their cultural and linguistic difference.

Such explanatory frameworks have also resulted in several pernicious stereotypes about Brogpa sexual laxity. Stories of German women who visit Brogpa villages for the true yet elusive “Aryan seed” have become legendary. A journalist, for instance, reports how

Adolf Hitler in 1938 reportedly dispatched one of the Third Reich’s racial experts on a personal survey of the Minaro region. It is said that Hitler even

considered sending a number of blond German women to have children by these “pure” Aryans.⁵²

Regardless of their facticity, such rumors are not innocuous; they have spurred wide interest in Brogpa racial exclusivity and made Brogpa men the ultimate objects of desire and sexuality. Filmmakers have even managed to interview German women who confess to sleeping with a true Aryan man in order to have a “child with superior intelligence.”⁵³ Yet, such “exalted” perceptions of Aryanness only serve to racialize Brogpa difference, further entrenching discourses of Brogpa difference as unchanging, ahistoric, and immutable.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued that the processes of Brogpa minoritization and their sense of exclusion owe much to the consolidation of the nation-state and its sovereign and territorial boundaries; although Ladakhi kings in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries relegated Brogpas to the margins of Ladakh’s social and political order, the postcolonial politics of identity and territory that began with India’s partition and the war of 1948 consolidated Brogpas as a numeric minority. The war fragmented Brogpas, and people who shared bonds of trade, family, and kinship were violently torn apart. The postcolonial state furthered Brogpa fragmentation by creating two administrative districts in Ladakh. The demarcation of the district boundary was yet another attempt to remap Ladakh into new spatial arrangements, ostensibly to guarantee equitable progress and development rather than to foster conflicts or competition. Rather than ensure equity, however, the district boundary arbitrarily divided Brogpas between Leh and Kargil, a division that reduced their voting strength in each district. Instead of ensuring their meaningful inclusion and participation in the national mainstream, electoral democracy transformed Brogpas into a “permanent minority.” Their miniscule numbers and the absence of a robust political voice made it difficult for Brogpas to figure predominantly in Ladakh’s political calculus.⁵⁴

Despite being tied to the processes of modernity and state-building, perceptions of Brogpa insularity and isolation persisted in Ladakh. The postcolonial reinvention of Ladakh as a space of progress and modernity culminated in the repudiation of a past that (to most Ladakhis) was most visibly represented by Brogpas and their “archaic” cultural practices. Indeed, for many, Brogpa-ness was a “racial” attribute that explained their cultural difference and insularity. The general perception was that because Brogpas had “lived isolated lives for centuries in such an inaccessibly harsh terrain, they [had been able to keep their] customs and DNA untainted by outsiders.”⁵⁵

Exaggerated accounts of their distinct race and indeterminate religious identities, I argued in this chapter, worked to disenfranchise Brogpas socially and politically. Despite celebrating their “difference” as a mark of Ladakh’s diverse cultural heritage, Ladakhis had an ambiguous relationship with Brogpas. They celebrated Brogpas during cultural festivals to serve a growing tourist economy

but because their “difference” confounded entrenched religious and political boundaries, Brogpas were also perceived as a threat to the existing social order. However, in 2003, Brogpa difference became politically salient due to dramatic shifts in Kargil’s governance structure as part of Mufti Sayeed’s healing touch policy. Although multiple religious and ethnic groups fought to secure a seat on the autonomous hill-development Council, Brogpas actively deployed perceptions of cultural and racial difference to justify their claims to the Council. Exaggerated stereotypes that had hitherto marginalized them from Kargil’s political mainstream became significant registers to redefine their subjectivities and stake claims to more inclusive forms of development and citizenship.

2 The Hill Council and the healing touch

In 2003, as part of its “healing touch policy,” the J&K government announced popular elections for the Autonomous Hill Development Council in Kargil, which was meant to strengthen participatory forms of development, governance, and democratic state-building in the war-ravaged district. Mufti Sayeed’s healing touch policy was in line with the Indian government’s new stance towards Kashmir, best illustrated by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s famous declaration that humanist rather than constitutional solutions were needed to resolve the Kashmir crisis (Aiyar 2004; see also Behera 2006: 251). The Hill Council, too, was promoted as an attempt to “heal Kargil” and ameliorate existing “regional imbalances” that had, in Mufti Sayeed’s view, “alienated” the people of Kargil.¹ Unlike their Buddhist counterparts in Leh district, Kargilis had rejected the proposal to elect a Council in 1995 when the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council Act (LAHDC) was first passed. To them, the Council reflected the priorities of the Buddhist leadership who wanted a UT status for Ladakh, which, if granted, could hurt Kargil’s long-term political or religious interests. Mufti Sayeed’s government was committed to changing this perception. Rather than being a divisive force aimed at the “trifurcation” of the state, the Hill Council, he passionately argued, would reinforce J&K’s “unity” by “assuaging [and ameliorating widespread] feelings of alienation and neglect.”²

In July of 2003, the enthusiasm for the Council was palpable in Kargil. The Hill Council extended the promise of political inclusion to communities who had hitherto been excluded from Kargil’s mainstream politics. While this promise extended to Kargilis in general, the Hill Council resonated most with ethnic and religious minorities who were insignificant to the region’s electoral politics. For them, the Hill Council was their only opportunity to realize the ideals of self-governance.

The LAHDC Act of 1995 stipulated that the Council should be comprised of a total of 30 village and district-level representatives, of which 26 members were to be elected while the remaining four seats were reserved for women and for nominated candidates from the district’s “principal religious minority.” Based on the mistaken “congruence of space, community, and interest” (van Beek 2001: 543), the process of demarcating electoral constituencies turned out to be a highly contentious one. For instance, disgruntled Buddhist minorities in Kargil

demanding that the government reconsider its demarcations to ensure that Buddhist villages were not included in constituencies where Muslims were in a clear majority. Brogpas, on the other hand, demanded a separate constituency so they could elect their own representative to the Council. Supporting their demands for an exclusive constituency, a journalist reported:

Even as the demarcation of constituencies for the recently conferred Kargil Autonomous Council is on, the distinctive Brogpa community in Kargil district has appealed for their own representation by [asking for] a separate constituency seat. And they have a reason to ask for it. Sonam Dorje, *Surpunch*, said that Brogpas represent a unique culture. [They speak] the language of the Dard stock [and are] considered to be the descendants of Aryans. Restricted in small pockets spread across the Indo-Pakistan border, this community is struggling a lot in the wake of present threats to this age-old culture . . . their cultural and religious practices are totally different from the rest of Ladakh.

(*Daily Excelsior*, 23 Feb. 2003)

Brogpas represented “a unique culture,” the news brief claimed; they spoke the language of the “Dard stock” and were considered to be the “descendants of Aryans,” a colonial perception from the eighteenth century that now formed an inalienable aspect of Brogpa history and collective identities (see Chapter 1). Brogpas claimed to be the living remnants of an “age-old culture,” a legacy they “struggled” to preserve despite the persistent threat of wars and violence on the India-Pakistan border.

Unlike other Buddhists who relied primarily on religion to demand a separate constituency, Brogpas crafted their demands on the basis of their distinct racial, cultural, and linguistic identities. I have argued previously that the social and political construction of Brogpa “difference” played a significant role in marginalizing them from Ladakh’s political sphere. Ladakhis ridiculed Brogpas for their unique, albeit “archaic,” lifestyle; their intransigent culture was considered to be out of step with modernity and responsible for their political isolation and marginality in Ladakh. In popular tourist brochures, Brogpas were represented as an exotic remnant of Ladakh’s past or as an enduring icon of cultural diversity, images that were used to bolster the clichéd assertion of J&K’s racial and ethnic diversity. Notwithstanding their glorification in tourist brochures, Brogpas were widely castigated for destabilizing neat and bounded categories of social and religious identities and posing a persistent threat to the hegemonic social order in Ladakh (see Chapter 1). Brogpas, however, relied on cultural stereotypes to legitimize their demands for a separate constituency seat, a phenomenon Kenneth MacDonald describes as “auto-orientalism” (2006: 192).³

This chapter explores the ways Brogpa difference—a source of their marginality and disenfranchisement in Ladakh—became a register of political rights, entitlements, and empowerment. The Hill Council enabled a reconfiguration of culture and a refashioning of Brogpa political subjectivities. But, to what extent

did tropes of culture, difference, and location allow Brogpas to realize their aspirations for an equitable and inclusive citizenship?

Before I get to the specifics of the Brogpa case, I will first discuss the political rationality behind decentralized Hill Councils in India's border districts. Hill Councils were meant to contain political demands for secession or statehood from India's disenfranchised border communities and sustain India's national rhetoric of "unity in diversity" (van Beek 1999: 451). Indeed, based on his extensive work in Leh, Martijn van Beek claims that the Hill Council was hardly seen as "counterhegemonic" or as a "threat to the national project" (van Beek 1998a: 36). On the contrary, the Council contributed to the national order by strengthening the projects of state-making, nationalism, and development in India's "remote" peripheries. In the context of Kargil, the war of 1999 between India and Pakistan had reinforced anxieties about national unity and security, especially among right-wing Hindu political organizations such as the VHP and the RSS who were not only extending their presence in Ladakh through extensive "social work" activities but also demanding J&K's "trifurcation" along regional and religious lines (Behera 2006: 121; van Beek 2004: 194). The foundational premise behind Kargil's Hill Council was to undermine territorial demands from regional groups in the J&K state and defeat proposals for trifurcation that threatened to disrupt J&K's fragile political stability.⁴ Since Hill Councils were also meant to correct the "injustices of nation-building" (Bajpai 2011: 5), they relied on discourses of multiculturalism and cultural plurality to enforce national cohesion along India's frontiers (van Beek 1999). The next section explores the ways in which the promise of self-governance established plurality and difference as dominant modes of border governance, mobilizing multiple interest groups to stake claims to the Hill Council. In the next section, I discuss how within a highly charged landscape where multiple groups vied for a seat in the Council, Brogpas deployed exaggerated stereotypes, particularly those that portrayed them as "quasi-Buddhist" and as "Aryan" to claim a seat in the Council. In a context where rights were anchored in discourses of cultural difference, it was clear that Brogpas, by virtue of their "unique and distinct" identities, were serious contenders for the seat.⁵ However, the framework of culture rights failed to take into account the economic, gendered, and political differences among Brogpas. How these divisions shaped their claims for an exclusive seat in the Council is discussed in the penultimate section. In the final section, I explore how Brogpa claims were severely thwarted by their internal social and political divisions, by the divergent stakes of state officials and Councillors in securing minority rights, and ultimately by intense forms of party, electoral, and population politics in Kargil.

Hill Councils as "exclusive governmentality"

Hill Councils, established first in the tribal hill-districts of Assam in 1952, were an extension of the British policy to grant exclusive rights of self-government to tribal minorities in areas that were designated as "excluded" or "partly excluded" according to the Government of India Act, 1936. Although meant to protect tribal

institutions from the hegemonic cultural and political influence of more “advanced areas,” the Act was profoundly shaped by assumptions about the primitiveness of “tribal” communities and the impossibility of incorporating them into the regular, more “civilized,” spheres of British law and governance.⁶

After India’s independence, Nehruvian liberals, influenced by their British predecessors, opposed aggressive forms of national integration by instituting additional provisions for self-governance and political decentralization in tribal territories (see Sonntag 1999; van Beek 1996, 2000a, 2001). One such provision was the autonomous district Council, introduced in the sixth schedule of the Indian Constitution to preserve the cultural autonomy of tribal communities and safeguard their rights over local land and natural resources.⁷ In postcolonial India, where tribal minorities were tenuously aligned with the new nation-state, autonomous Councils provided the Indian state a viable solution to manage cultural diversity without acceding to the proliferating demands of political secession. Indeed, autonomous Hill Councils were primarily created among tribal minorities in frontier areas where loyalty to India was weak and inchoate (Sonntag 1999, 2004).

It is clear from the preceding discussion that autonomous Councils were enmeshed in multiple grids of political recognition—tribal, strategic, geographically remote, culturally distinct—all of which shaped what Ghosh (2006) identifies as the logic of “exclusive governmentality,” a logic that sought to reconcile the goals of a pan-national consciousness with those of tribal cultural autonomy, especially in India’s remote and disputed border regions. Since its first implementation in Assam, autonomous Councils, as van Beek argues, have been instituted in response to a range of political demands in India: from immigrant communities who demanded citizenship rights in Darjeeling to “disgruntled” minority populations in Ladakh who sought autonomy from oppressive state governments (van Beek 1999: 539).⁸

While questions of tribal autonomy, nationalism, and territory profoundly shaped exclusive political arrangements for India’s “disgruntled” minorities, global political economic trends of the 1990s also played a critical role (see also van Beek 1999: 439). The demise of the developmental state on a global scale reinforced the need for political decentralization and participatory development (Heller 2001). Despite its earlier roots in the Gandhian notion of *gram swaraj* or village self-governance, the most immediate precursor of participatory governance in India was the global turn towards decentralization, a result of the dissolution of the “Soviet Union and the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe.”⁹ Such political transformations appeared alongside post-Cold War economic reforms that championed open markets to minimize the “inefficiencies and non-transparencies” of “socialism and centralized planning” (Tharakan 2007). Decentralization, therefore, reappeared in India, not in its earlier Gandhian conceptualization, but as an attempt to roll back the state, open up markets for free trade, and champion the model of good governance to “meet the needs of poor and politically marginal groups” (Johnson 2003: 1).

Since the 1990s, the “scaling-up” of participatory approaches has resulted in the surge of NGOs and other non-state institutions working to improve grassroots

development in India (Gaventa and Valderrama 1999; Sharma 2006; van Beek 1999). However, decentralization has not just “rolled back the state” or attenuated its powers; it has also led to the restructuring of states to make them more amenable to participatory governance (Johnson 2003; Ribot 2011; van Beek 1999: 439). For instance, in 1993, the government of India passed extensive reforms to “empower rural representative bodies” called the *panchayats*, a third tier of government created to devolve financial and political powers to village-level committees across India (Johnson 2003: 1).

Unlike the *panchayats*, Hill Councils are not village-level bodies but district-level entities constituted to grant “culturally distinct minorities” in India’s frontier districts a measure of political autonomy (Sonntag 2004: 13; van Beek 1999). Scholars and policy-makers from Assam where autonomous Hill Councils were established in the 1950s claim that Hill Councils are a unique mode of governance because they involve the “emotional and active involvement” of “tribal” populations in “preserving their ethnic identities, customary laws, [and rights over] their land and natural resources” (Ganguly 1997: 332).

While originally constituted to “protect” tribal rights over local land and resources, Hill Councils are now actively involved in improving the state of socio-economic development on India’s peripheries. Ganguly argues that following the reorganization of Northeastern states in the 1960s and 1970s, Hill Councils were assigned to take on “developmental functions in relation to agriculture, animal husbandry, community projects, cooperative societies, social welfare, village planning or any other matter to which the executive powers of the state extend[ed]” (1997: 332). In other words, Hill Councils gradually extended their role from “tribal protection” to “tribal development,” a role that aligned well with the nationwide rhetoric of participatory development that was gaining popularity in the 1990s. Ladakhis, too, “complain[ed] about stepmotherly treatment” (van Beek 1999: 435) from the J&K government, therefore, an autonomous Hill Council that relied heavily on the rhetoric of “participation” was considered critical to correct regional disparities and to provide Ladakhis meaningful avenues for self-governance.

Clearly then, the rethinking of difference and location as frameworks for “rights, democracy, and [development]” (Larson and Ribot 2004: 1) enabled Ladakhis to renegotiate their place in the wider body politic. Yet, an overwhelming focus on “difference” also led to the widespread politicization of collective identities (van Beek 2000a, 2001). For instance, while based on real and tangible regional inequities and imbalances, Ladakhi claims for autonomy were deeply anchored in perceptions of “irreconcilable” regional and religious divisions between Kashmir and Ladakh. In the next section, I briefly explore why rather than championing a more inclusive agenda of social progress and development, Ladakhi claims to “difference” were rooted in narrowly conceived understandings of Ladakhi history and identity.¹⁰ In order to fully grasp how and why Brogpas used the discourse of racial, ethnic, and cultural difference to rally for a Council seat, it is crucial to review the contentious history of the Hill Council and its role in intensifying identity politics as well as the regional and religious divisions between Leh and Kargil.

The Hill Council in Leh: regional and religious conflicts

Before its formation in Kargil in 2003, the Hill Council was first constituted in 1995 in Leh district. Martijn van Beek's extensive and insightful analysis is critical for understanding the history of the Council and the numerous political strategies that the Buddhist leadership adopted to "convince the Centre that self-rule was not only possible, but necessary for the proper development of the region and the protection of its 'unique identity'" (van Beek 1998b). The Council's formation in Leh was the culmination of a prolonged struggle launched by the Ladakh Buddhist Association (LBA) for the status of a Union Territory (UT), a political arrangement that would bring Ladakh under the direct ambit of the central government in Delhi. In order to secure their political autonomy from Kashmir, the Buddhist leadership in Leh blamed the J&K government for its discriminatory policies toward Ladakh's religious and cultural minorities. Even when sentiments or experiences of discrimination were not widespread at the time, van Beek notes, the LBA's political strategy was to ascertain that Ladakhi Buddhists expressed a sense of victimization so that the demands for a UT status could be legitimized (van Beek 2001: 379, 382). For instance, this is how the LBA President, Tsering Samphel, framed Ladakhi demands for autonomy from Kashmir:

Except for the Dogra's suzerainty as a commonality, Ladakh is fundamentally different from Kashmir in all respects—culturally, ethnically, and linguistically. Over the years the successive governments of the State have adopted a policy of discrimination and subversion towards the region with the sole objective of stifling its people and marginalizing its historical, religious, and cultural identity.

(Samphel 2000: 1)

Apart from stating the irreconcilable differences that separated Ladakh from Kashmir, the LBA also noted the state's deliberate policies of "discrimination" and "subversion" to marginalize Ladakh's historic, religious and cultural identity. Such fundamental differences, the LBA asserted, translated into different political aspirations for the people of Kashmir and Ladakh:

It is erroneous to equate Kashmir valley with the rest of the State. Ladakh constitutes 69.6% of the total J&K territory with a distinct geo-political and geo-cultural identity of its own. The aspirations of the people of Ladakh and their national outlook are different from those of the people of Kashmir.

(ibid.: 7)

While Kashmiris had been fighting for *aazadi* or independence from Indian rule, the LBA's Union Territory demand called for Ladakh's greater integration with India. Kashmir's complex geography and politics, however, made the demands for a Union Territory status or Ladakh's complete secession from Kashmir

untenable. In order to wrest some form of autonomy, and to at least negotiate for a Hill Council, the LBA instituted a social boycott against Ladakhi Muslims by successfully harnessing decades of alienation against Kashmir's predominantly Muslim administration (see van Beek 1998a, 2000a, 2001). Mired in divisive local politics, the Hill Council was the culmination of a deliberate strategy to cultivate religious discord between Buddhists and Muslims, a phenomenon that resulted in what van Beek refers to as the "communalization" of politics in Ladakh (van Beek 2004: 196).¹¹ Many scholars who have written extensively on the social boycott, which lasted from 1989 until 1992, document in painstaking detail the extent of repression in Ladakh at the time: all forms of social and economic interactions between Buddhists and Muslims were severely discouraged (Aggarwal 2004: 43; Ahmed 1996; Srinivas 1998; van Beek 1998b: 304). Buddhists were asked to cut off ties with their Muslim kin and neighbors; those who flouted the norms were penalized. There were incidents of arson in Leh and several Muslims were violently converted to Buddhism.¹² By fostering extreme fragmentations across regional and religious boundaries, the social boycott violently tore apart Ladakh's syncretic religious heritage and preexisting modes of sociality. Moreover, it worsened the political standoff between the districts of Leh and Kargil. Ultimately, the central government rejected the LBA's demand for a UT status, agreeing, however, to constitute a Hill Council in accordance with the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council Act, 1995. The "autonomous Council formula was regarded by some as the most promising model" to ameliorate regional disparities, diffuse longstanding Buddhist demands for a Union Territory status, and "pacify a strategically sensitive part of Jammu and Kashmir" (van Beek 1998a; 1999: 438).

Kargilis, at the time, rejected the offer, claiming that the Council was founded on the deliberate exclusion and disenfranchisement of Ladakhi Muslims. Many Muslims feared that Buddhism in Ladakh had become radicalized due to its "dangerous liaisons" (van Beek 2004) with Hindutva's core ideologies of purity and religious fundamentalism that had severely undermined the Council's foundational premise of strengthening a unified regional identity.¹³ Political alliances with National Conference (NC)—the state's largest political party that was opposed to the idea of autonomy at the time—might also have shaped their decision to reject the Council. According to Rigzin Jora, the Minister for Science and Technology and a prime protagonist for Ladakh's UT status:

Leh finally got a Hill Council in 1995 because the central government was headed by the BJP and there was governor's rule in Kashmir. And this is why the Hill Council was unacceptable to Kargilis. As soon as we got the Council, a popular government headed by the National Conference came to power in Kashmir and this created many problems for us. In fact, Kargilis felt empathy for the movement in Kashmir. Since they shared a common religious faith, they opposed the Council.

(Interview, December 2003)

Jora alleged that Kargilis were reluctant to distance themselves from the politics of separatism in Kashmir; despite their political and ideological differences with Kashmir, Kargilis shared, according to him, a degree of empathy for the movement given their “common religious faith.” The Hill Council from its inception, then, was fraught with religious and political cleavages undermining popular perceptions of Ladakh’s unity and homogeneity.

In 2003, however, Kargil finally agreed to hold elections for the Council, a decision that was shaped predominantly by the increased powers vested in the Council by the chief minister of J&K and the leader of the People’s Democratic Party (PDP), Mufti Mohammad Sayeed.¹⁴ The creation of a Council in Kargil was a critical first step to counter the RSS-VHP’s proposals for the trifurcation of the state along “communal” and “regional” lines and sustain the state’s “secular” and “plural” character.¹⁵ The Kargil crisis had also triggered “incipient transborder identity formations” among Balti populations in Kargil and Baltistan who blamed the LoC for their cultural and religious dissolution (MacDonald 2006: 192). The Council was meant to assuage incipient Kargili demands that favored the merger of the predominantly Muslim areas of Pakistan-administered Gilgit, Baltistan, and Skardu with Ladakh to create Greater Ladakh, a proposal that was unacceptable to the Buddhist leadership in Leh and threatened to worsen the territorial impasse between India and Pakistan.¹⁶

Despite its contentious history in Ladakh and its explicit imperative to maintain Jammu and Kashmir’s territorial status quo, the Hill Council offered Kargilis the promise of progress, equity, and economic development. Mufti’s promise of “healing” was considered necessary to redress historic regional inequities. Proponents of the Hill Council emphasized the inability of the centrally administered bureaucracy to distribute resources equitably, a failure that had severely impeded Kargil’s progress and development. This is how Nasir Munshi, an executive Councillor, described the purpose of the Council:

The core purpose of the Hill Council was to improve grassroots development; to initiate development in accordance with the needs of the local populations; up until now, we had repeatedly seen how development projects were enforced on us from the top. It was *afsarshahi* [top-down rule]. The budget, if underutilized, would be returned to the J&K government and we always had non-locals who were appointed in top bureaucratic positions.

Before the Hill Council, the J&K government was responsible for distributing and implementing development policies in Kargil, a process that had enforced top-down development planning and resulted in the underutilization of financial resources. The Council was constituted to enhance participatory models of development; allow local Councillors to formulate development policies that were more conducive to Kargil’s culture and ecology; encourage Kargilis with sufficient knowledge about the region and its culture to occupy key administrative positions; strike a balance between needs and allocations; and

strengthen democratic governance through administrative efficiency and greater accountability.¹⁷ Furthermore, according to Nasir, before the Hill Council,

[F]unds would be allocated to Kargil only if it supported the dominant political party in the state; we were constantly at the mercy of the state government. Therefore, we now want a development not a political Council so that the flow of funds and resources is not disrupted by party affiliations.

By rejecting the Council's partisan and contentious political history and embracing its promise of progress and development instead, Kargilis claimed to privilege development over religious, regional, or party politics. They envisioned a "development" Council bereft of divisive politics that would work unanimously toward a concerted vision of growth and development. Partisan party and regional politics, Nasir claimed, had stalled the social and economic development of Kargil for decades and it was time for Kargilis to renounce their petty politics.

The Hill Council was not just an alternative vision of development; it was, as Nasir suggested, an alternative vision of politics that could unite people in their pursuit of development, regardless of their political ideology or affiliation. However, an apolitical vision of development was hard to implement in practice. Despite its promise of sweeping transformations in Kargil's political culture, the Kargil Council, much like its counterpart in Leh, intensified divisive forms of religious, electoral, and representational politics (see also van Beek 1999: 439). In the next section, I discuss the ways in which the logic of participatory development—particularly its overwhelming emphasis on direct political representation—divided communities on the basis of their location, religion, and ethnicity. I turn my attention to Brogpas to demonstrate the ways in which the "politicization" of difference opened up spaces for Brogpas to stake claims to the Council. But their reliance on "culture" and "difference" also reinforced existing political fragmentations between Brogpas and their Buddhist counterparts in Kargil.

Maintaining culture from "top to toe"

Contrary to establishing an apolitical vision of development, the Council elections of 2003 politicized development profoundly. As already noted, of a total of 30 Council members, the elections were held for 26 Councillors while the remaining four Council seats were reserved for women and for Kargil's principal religious minority. Population, rather than remoteness or inaccessibility, served as a parameter for demarcating 26 constituencies, a decision that angered many Buddhist communities, who claimed that the constituency demarcations were skewed in favor of Muslim candidates. They decided to boycott the elections. Brogpas, however, refused to participate in the boycott even though they were unable to secure a separate constituency due to their miniscule population.¹⁸

In the absence of an independent constituency, Brogpas rallied for a seat under the "principal religious minority" category. Since assertions of "difference" saturated Ladakh's mainstream politics and were a legitimate platform to demand

political entitlements, Brogpas argued that they were Ladakh's quintessential cultural and religious minority who could never successfully win the constituency elections. Brogpas asserted that their "culture" was the most distinct in Ladakh, a claim they used to outcompete their Muslim and Buddhist counterparts who also fought for the same seat. As Sonam Dorje, the ex-*Surpunch* of Garkone, commented in a local village meeting: "We deserve to be nominated for this seat. After all, it is Brogpas who have maintained their culture from top to toe."

Dorje's assertion that Brogpas "deserved" an exclusive seat was based on popular stereotypes that portrayed Brogpas as a "stubborn" and "unchanging" people who had maintained their "social and political isolation" despite efforts to convert them to Buddhism or incorporate them more fully into Ladakh's social and political order (see Chapter 1). Deploying stereotypes about their political isolation and cultural distinctiveness to claim a "special minority" status in Kargil, Brogpas wrote a letter to the Chief Minister of J&K:

We, the two villages of Dartsigs and *Garkone*, have a population of nearly 200 families. We were thus unable to elect our own representatives to the Council . . . the two villages are also located on the actual line of control and we are under constant fear of shelling from across the border . . . keeping the above-mentioned facts in view, the members of the two villages request your good self to kindly nominate one representative from the Brogpa community out of the reserved quota for principal minority as our community is a *special minority* among Buddhists.

(emphasis mine)

By mobilizing claims to a "special minority status," Brogpas managed to foreground two diverse agendas: first, they distanced themselves politically from the Buddhists of Kargil, who, unlike Brogpas, had boycotted the Council elections, and, second, they asserted their ethnic/cultural distinction rather than their religious commonality with Buddhists.¹⁹ The notion of a minority, however, had multiple significations in Kargil: depending on the context, it could loosely refer to a particular caste, religion, and/or ethnicity.²⁰ Diverse ethnic/religious groups thus competed to be recognized as a principal religious minority. For instance, with a predominance of Shi'a Muslims in Kargil, Islamic sects such as those of Sunnis and the Noorbakshis each claimed to be a principal religious minority, as did Buddhist groups from Shargol, Chigtan, Wakha, and Mulbek. Endless debates about the "minority" question—from village meetings to ministerial conversations, from village compounds to the secretariat—dominated social and political venues in Kargil. Far from being static, however, the category of a minority was politically mutable, deeply invested in multiple axes of social differences that were fluid and impossible to concretize.

By the time the struggle for nominations peaked, five different applications claiming the status of a "principal religious minority" had arrived in the CEC's office. Several officials rejected such pleas from multiple minorities as

“ignorant” and “irrational.” Rigzin Jora, a high-level cabinet minister, argued that his colleagues in the ministry “were under the wrong impression that the minority category could mean a Sunni or a Noorbakshi Muslim. Since Muslims were the principal religious minority in Leh, Buddhists were, by virtue of a similar logic, the principal religious minority in Kargil.”²¹ Buddhist communities in Kargil echoed Jora’s logic. Master Norboo, who headed the Kargil Buddhist Action Committee, commented:

I think we Buddhists should be united in our demands. Now Brogpas are coming up with this justification and that. They say they are a scheduled caste, they are a unique culture, they are from the Aryan race, etc. But for me, we are all Buddhists. Like in Hinduism, for example, whether you worship Ram or Shiva, a Hindu is a Hindu.

In order to undermine Brogpa demands for a nominated seat, the Kargil Buddhist Action Committee asserted that it was time for Kargili Buddhists to project a unified front regardless of their differences. Just as their Hindu counterparts subscribed to a common religious faith despite worshipping multiple gods and goddesses, Brogpas, too, were asked to ignore the insignificant differences that separated them from other Buddhist groups in the region. Brogpas disagreed vehemently. In his angry outburst, Dorje, the *Surpunch* of Garkone, pointed out that “incommensurable cultural differences” separated Brogpas from the rest of the Buddhists and that the government’s proposal to allocate a single seat for two diverse groups was grossly unfair:

The government keeps telling us that they are going to give one joint nomination for Brogpas and the Buddhists from Mulbek and Wakha. I told Haji Nisar Ali that if you want to you could add Wakha and Mulbek to Zangskar and give them one nomination. They are *khaas* (pure) Buddhists. *Ham na kabhi mile the na kabhi milenge* [We were never one with them and can never be in the future.] After all, we are Brogpas.

Dorje was concerned that the government might count Brogpas as Buddhist rather than as a distinct cultural group, a decision that would subsume Brogpa cultural specificities under the wider ambit of Buddhism. His claim that culture rather than religion should be the basis of the principal minority seat reflected in his view a fundamental difference between *khaas* (pure or authentic) Buddhists and Brogpas; such differences, Dorje claimed, were historic and irreconcilable.²² For Brogpas, thus, culture was no longer just an index of difference, but also of rights, a realization that resonated with the global resurgence of culture, distinction and authenticity as vocabularies of “contemporary political talk” (Cowan et al. 2001: 3). To what extent were Brogpas able to steer the political discourse away from religion to culture? And, to what extent did the discourse of cultural rights shape Brogpa political subjectivities and enable their greater participation in local and national politics? I turn to these questions in the next two sections.

Culture: a new vocabulary of rights

The term “culture” surfaced routinely in my conversations with Brogpas. Villagers in Garkone spoke of the ways they differed from other Ladakhis, both Buddhists and Muslims. Far from being uniform, their comments were heterogeneous and highlighted their changing, yet disenfranchised position in Ladakh’s social and political life. For instance, the following comment by Murup, a 40-year-old Brogpa man, suggests how their cultural distinction had forced Brogpas to live what he categorized as an undignified life:

Whenever I come to Leh, I feel stunted. I have to walk with my head down. I feel so conscious about being a Brogpa and being recognized as one. Although we are a far superior people to Ladakhis both racially and culturally, they treat us almost like a lower caste.

Murup’s comments reflect how Brogpas perceived their position in Ladakhi society; despite their “superior” race and culture, they felt “stunted” in towns like Leh where they were treated as a “lower caste” and chastised for their religious and cultural difference (see Chapter 1). Under the garb of culture talk, even government officials used pernicious stereotypes about Brogpa difference to ridicule and denounce them. In one such incident, when the negotiations for the nominated seat were at their peak, I accompanied Norbu, one of the contenders for the nominated seat from Garkone, to Mirza’s house in Leh. Mirza, an important government official at the time and not very supportive of Norbu’s candidature, was meeting with other state officers when we arrived at his residence. Mirza motioned us to sit down and introduced me to the rest of the group as a researcher interested in the study of Brogpa culture. Since Brogpa culture in popular discourses was invoked only in relation to exotic and archaic customs, Norphel, another state official, asked me almost instantly: “Have you figured out the reasons why Brogpas abstain from food items such as cow milk, eggs, and chicken?” I wondered why Norphel hadn’t directly asked Norbu, who was sitting right beside me. I tried to respond, albeit reluctantly, when Mirza interjected instantly: “Brogpas have changed so much that they won’t mind eating dog’s flesh now.” Norbu, a strict vegetarian, found this remark offensive and quipped in a light-hearted tone, similar to the tone that Mirza had used. “Why should *we* eat dog’s flesh? It is *your* privilege, Sir.”

Despite its lightheartedness, the conversation was awkward and hardly neutral; it reflected the ease with which Brogpas could be ridiculed in public settings and the ways social hierarchies were instantiated through discursive strategies in which culture talk was an instrument of power and politics. Mirza’s reference to dog meat referred to a shifting moral universe in which Brogpas were no longer the “pure and authentic” people who abstained from “impure” food products. Instead, they had renounced their goodness to resort to petty and lowly acts. But, above all, the incident reflected Norbu’s attempt to resist what he later told me was “Mirza’s futile attempt to discredit his intentions to join the Council as a minority candidate.”

Yet such experiences were also tempered with a proud assertion of their difference: Morup, for instance, commented on how “Brotpa culture was appreciated far and wide” because of which they frequently traveled to Delhi and other cities in India:

We are who we are because of our culture, our dress, our songs and festivals. People notice us because of our culture. I was able to visit Delhi for the Republic Day celebrations and that too without paying a penny. People in Lalung have no culture because of which they are never invited to visit Delhi and other places.

Because Brotpas unlike their Muslim neighbors “had culture,” they were invited to social and political performances in Delhi and elsewhere where they marched in their customary wear, carrying their *dhols* and *surnas* to the rousing cheers of an audience transfixed by the spectacular diversity of the Indian subcontinent. Such events, as Srirupa Roy argues, are “deliberate strategies of nationalization,” in which cultural performances of ethnic and tribal minorities are used to reinforce the cliché of India’s diversity (2006: 200). Through highly elaborate and theatricalized performances, Brotpa difference, like those of other tribal and frontier communities, becomes aestheticized; accompanying slogans of unity in diversity render cultural difference assimilable, no longer posing a threat to the national social and political order.

For Brotpas, however, such moments are more than instances of state- and nation-making on India’s remote frontiers. Memories from such events become aspects of their individual and collective identities; they are relived through pictures, souvenirs, and mementos that embellish Brotpa homes and represent them as the quintessential icons of India’s celebrated multiculturalism. Brotpas who participate in state rituals take immense pride in such fleeting moments of recognition and visibility; for instance, beaming with pride, older Brotpas often recalled the awe in Indira Gandhi’s eyes when “she saw this unique and colorful tribe,” one among the many that represented “India’s vast and glorious diversity.” Even before the formation of the Council then, culture already played a significant role in tying Brotpas to India’s multicultural polity, even if it was (mostly) through theatrical and exaggerated performances of their alterity.

Notwithstanding their celebration in public life, Brotpas recognized that India’s national order had failed to ameliorate their political and economic marginality and collective disenfranchisement; indeed, democracy, they claimed, had depoliticized their sociopolitical differences and rendered Brotpa inequalities invisible under the cloak of electoral privilege. More specifically, perceptions of Brotpa racial, cultural, and religious alterity had played a profound role in marginalizing them from Ladakh’s sociopolitical order, perceptions that now served as political instruments to demand an exclusive seat in the Council.²³

The Hill Council, therefore, provided Brotpas a new vocabulary to contest their social and political exclusion; Brotpas crafted their demands for a nominated seat using strands of marginality, disenfranchisement, and difference, claims

that were based on pervasive social stereotypes—predominantly the ones that identified them as “Aryans” and “only partly Buddhist.” Scholars have noted how the global mobilization of indigenous or subaltern rights has enabled many disenfranchised groups to attribute newer, politically potent meanings to what were previously derogatory or undignified labels or categories. “Derogatory categories” are increasingly used “as banners for political mobilization,” they argue, a process that significantly redefines how certain subaltern groups position themselves vis-à-vis the state and lay claims to an inclusive and substantive citizenship (Levi and Dean 2003: 8). Indeed, disenfranchised minorities around the globe are now demanding some form of group-differentiated citizenship. By challenging the ideal of a homogeneous citizenship—“an idealized model of the polis in which fellow citizens share a common descent, language and culture” (Kymlicka 1996: 2), the growing demands of minority groups for greater autonomy or recognition reflect what scholars argue is the deep dissonance between cultural plurality and the perceived homogeneity of a nation as a culturally monolithic unit (Gagnon et al. 2003).

Brogpas, too, voluntarily embraced social and cultural stereotypes that had hitherto excluded them from the sociopolitical arena. In doing so, they rejected religion as the primary axis of social differentiation in Kargil, and hence the only credible basis for deciding the nominees to the Council. Their claims, while not acceptable to the vast majority of Buddhists in Kargil, could not be disregarded. As Chapter 1 argued, discourses that identified Brogpas as the “only authentic descendants of Aryans in India” gave rise to a whole gamut of scholars, journalists, travelers, and their misguided efforts to explore what they believed to be an important thread in understanding “Indian identity” within complex histories of human migrations across time and space.²⁴ Even when their provenance could be traced to the British, perceptions of Brogpa racial alterity found widespread currency in the Indian postcolonial imaginary as several political ideologies revived debates about origins and identities, transforming the “Aryan question” into a national fetish (see Thapar 1999, 2000; see also Aggarwal 2004: 230).²⁵

Unlike its hegemony in other parts of India, however, Aryanness in Ladakh was associated with perceptions of homogeneity and primitiveness, perceptions that contributed immensely to excluding Brogpas from the social and political mainstream of Kargil.²⁶ Brogpa cultural differences were thus deeply racialized and attributed to their Indo-Aryan origins. Race, rather than history, was deployed to explain existing differences between Brogpas and Ladakhis: be it their language, attire, or rituals, Brogpa cultural difference was deemed inherent and unchanging. Alongside enduring perceptions about their “Aryan” identities, Brogpas were also considered only “partially Buddhists.” Despite their conversion to Buddhism several centuries ago and its entrenchment in their lives in the past decade, their official and popular construction as an “archaic Aryan” community that still followed the age-old religion, *Bonchos*, provided a distinct political platform to Brogpas at a time when cultural distinction and marginality were becoming popular criteria for securing political rights. By deploying the language of collective rights, Brogpas demanded what Kymlicka (1996) identifies

as multicultural citizenship—a model of citizenship that recognizes collectivities such as minority or indigenous groups as legitimate bearer of rights (Cowan et al. 2001).²⁷

Indeed, then, Mufti's vision of "healing" allowed a rearticulation between culture and rights as well as marginality and entitlements, enabling Brogpas to stake claims to the Council and its promise of political inclusion and development.²⁸ No longer just a marker of alterity, Brogpa difference became a potent medium for securing political rights and entitlements, a way to transform themselves from passive subjects into active rights-bearing citizens. Despite the "emancipatory aura" of the rights discourse, however, its implications for communities, Cowan et al. remind us, are complex and contradictory (2001: 1). Although culture offered a new vocabulary to demand political rights, it also engendered a social order in which Brogpas viewed cultural change as a threat to their collective identities. In order to secure a "pure" and "authentic" culture, Brogpas enforced new social regulations to police everyday cultural shifts in their language, attire, and education.

Culture as rights or culture as duty

A reliance on cultural rights generated tremendous anxiety about cultural "loss," spurring village-wide attempts to monitor and discourage social change. Brogpas became wary of cultural shifts, tirelessly searching for avenues to preserve what they considered to be a "dying" culture. As Gamphel dudo, the *Surpunch*, told me: "Even Dalai Lamaji advises us that our children should acquire good education and good values but we should, he says, keep our culture intact." Older Brogpas were concerned that the younger generation "preferred Ladakhi over Brogskad or never wore the customary *kho* (headdress)."

Although not averse to modern education, Brogpas had long sought international funding to construct an exclusive school for the community, which would instill among younger Brogpas a pride for their culture, history, and heritage. While anxieties about "cultural loss" were pervasive even before 2003, they became prominent during the negotiations for the nominated seat. For instance, in 2003, as Brogpas enacted their *yat-pa* ceremony during a state-sponsored festival, Sonam, my research assistant, expressed his concern about Norboo's cotton trousers not being part of the traditional Brogpa ensemble. In recent years the village headman had instituted fines (*chatpa*) on people who refused to wear the "traditional" ensemble for their village and regional festivals. Indeed, a women's group called the *Amma Chokspa*, constituted by the LBA to prevent men from drinking alcohol (other than the locally brewed *chang*), closely monitored the villagers to ensure that they wore their customary ensemble for village festivals. In instances where villagers showed up to festivals in modern clothes, members of the *amma chokspa* threw gunny bags at them, ridiculing them in public for violating culturally shared norms and obligations.

The motivation to preserve their culture and discourage creative agency or innovation is not limited to Brogpas. Anthropologists argue that indigenous

communities are often obligated to “preserve” their “traditional” cultures so they can be deemed “authentic”—a fundamental “condition of recognition” in multicultural polities that eventually determines whether or not indigenous communities have access to basic rights, freedoms, and resources (Povinelli 2002: 3). For instance, Povinelli argues that indigenous minorities in Australia, in order to be recognized as such, must produce “a detailed account of their traditions and the force with which they identify with them” (2002: 39). Yet, the demand on social groups to perform an impossible authenticity is precisely where, according to Povinelli (2002), the “cunning of recognition” lies.

Therefore, while cultural rights produced new forms of Brogpa political subjectivities, they also reified Brogpa culture; instead of viewing cultural change as a normative aspect of their cultural history, any indication of change or transformation was regarded by Brogpas as a threat to the dominant cultural order, and often penalized. As Brogpa culture became associated with the language of rights and entitlements, the “imperative” to conform to an “authentic” culture led to “repressive forms of communitarianism” (Fraser 2000). Indeed, *Chatpa* was a perfect illustration of how culture was deeply embedded in complex and multiple grids of repression, sociability, and obligations instead of being an expression of choice and/or free will.

The attempt to discourage cultural shifts was not limited only to festivals and cultural performances. Marital alliances with Ladakhi Buddhists generated everyday anxieties about racial purity; hence, people’s marital choices and social relationships were closely monitored. In doing so, Brogpas forged new social boundaries or ascribed newer meanings to pre-existing social distinctions. For instance, their trepidation about cultural loss was often expressed in a racialized idiom that separated *khaas* (pure) from *sapas* (impure) Brogpas, making identity an everyday arena of contestation within the village (see also Chapter 1).²⁹

Distinctions between *sapas* and *khaas* were heightened as Brogpas decried the Buddhist leadership for wanting to “steal” their nominated seat. The widening rift between Brogpas and Buddhists was not limited to the political sphere but infiltrated intimate domains of sociality and community. Frustrated with what he thought to be extreme political maneuvering by Buddhists to “steal” the nominated seat, Khyentse, a village elder from Garkone, asserted that there was a difference in “character” between Brogpas and *Bodh*, a fact that the leadership in Kargil should have known:

This CEC, I tell you, is so inefficient. He should have known that there was no way he could classify us as *bodh*. We say that the *sapas* have a black heart and a cloying tongue. That is why we don’t even burn them in the same place where we burn other *khaas* Brogpas.

Clearly, the ongoing negotiations for the nominated seat had deeply upset Khyentse who, in an angry outburst, outlined what he viewed as a fundamental difference of character between Brogpas and Buddhists. Such deep and irremediable flaws of character were not confined to Buddhists from Wakha and Mulbek

but also included *sapas* households within Garkone who too had a “black heart” and a “cloying tongue,” a combination that could not be trusted in politics. Even though many villagers did not share his assessments, and even though Khyentse himself felt differently about *Bodhs* in other contexts, Khyentse’s angry outbursts were reflective of how emergent tropes of “incommensurability” and “difference” were quickly being mapped on to what had for long been relationships of affinity and intimacy. As the contest for nominations heated up, fluid and contingent social differences became even more pronounced; while most visible in the sphere of religion, the Council also solidified divisions of class and gender as political struggles to elect a consensual Brogpas candidate intensified.

Meeting at the *changra*: debating eligibility

A pressing concern for Brogpas was the need to elect a consensual candidate from the villages of Garkone and Dartsigs in order to forward a united front and strengthen their demands for the nominated seat. After a series of private meetings between Khyentse and Norbu, the two main contenders for the nominated seat, failed to dissolve their political differences, the *grongpen* (village messenger) announced a village-wide meeting to settle the discord.

On a cold morning in November, a handful of villagers assembled in the *changra* for the much-awaited meeting. Several men from the village were busy in the *nullahs*; others were away at high-altitude army posts carrying supplies for the military. Younger men employed as military recruits were also not home. Most of the women were busy fetching firewood and collecting fodder for their goats since the winter had set in. Although a very significant decision for most Brogpas, the imperatives of seasonal labor had prevented many of them from attending the meeting. Besides, the conflict between Norbu and Khyentse had dragged on for too long and people were, I was repeatedly told, “running out of patience.” Despite their absence from the meeting, most Brogpas were aligned with one or the other candidate, a decision that was based on complex and often cross-cutting networks of family, kinship, and friendship.

Norbu’s and Khyentse’s households called *Chilaspa* and *Sembpa* respectively were prominent land-owning families of Garkone. Land and cattle had been the primary indicators of wealth and privilege until only a couple of decades ago (see Chapter 1). People remembered Norbu’s great-grandfather as someone who loaned sacks of barley to families in Garkone and adjacent villages during times of drought and food scarcity. For instance, Gandup dudo, who was around 75 years old, recalled how:

There was lot of respect for *khandan* (wealthy) families because people would depend on them for survival. Food used to be scarce, therefore rich families would loan barley and other food products. But now everybody gets subsidized rations from the store that the government has opened. This is good in a way but it has changed how people relate to each other.

Although an increasing reliance on government-subsidized rations had reduced the significance of land and cattle and transformed patterns of reliance and sociability (see also Chapter 1), social stratifications continued to shape day-to-day interactions among Brogpas. Even amidst the changes that Gandup dudo pointed out, deference to *khandan* families continued to be the norm. However, differences in class and status played no substantive role in deciding candidates for positions of the *nambardar* (village headman) or the *grongpen* (village messenger). They were both selected on the basis of *kutodis*, a “lottery system” that ensured that political power was circulated among villagers, not consolidated in one individual or household for long (Bertelsen 1997b; see also Aggarwal 2004: 73). For the Councillor’s position, however, *kutodis* was not considered a viable option. Although *nambardars* had significant responsibilities, most of these duties were confined to the village. The Councillor’s post entailed managing a bigger budget, taking important decisions about development policy, and, more importantly, meeting frequently with district and state officers. The Councillor, I was told, needed to be educated, articulate, and well connected with ministers and district and state officials in the bureaucracy. But, in their view, only a handful of villagers possessed these qualities. Both Norbu and Khyentse had attained formal education until the tenth grade, which distinguished them from other Brogpa men and women of their generation who did not have sufficient formal education. They were also known in important political circles in Kargil. Arguably, then, Norbu’s and Khyentse’s access to education and political networks made them suitable contenders for the Councillor’s position.

I was skeptical but hopeful that Khyentse and Norbu would reconcile their differences at the public meeting. Villagers cautioned me that the meeting could turn violent. I was advised to pick a place carefully so I could escape unharmed if anything untoward happened. The animosities between Khyentse and Norbu were not limited to the Councillor’s issue. There was a possibility that past conflicts between the two families over land and other unresolved matters could interfere with the reconciliation efforts.

One of the most recent issues involved Norbu’s role in ousting Khyentse from the *nambardar*’s position. During his term as the *nambardar* that lasted almost ten years, Khyentse, it was claimed, had siphoned off government funds that were meant for bunkers and for recompensing victims of the Kargil war. He was also blamed for distributing solar lamps among his close relatives instead of the needy and the well-deserving. Moreover, as part of the watershed committee for an NGO project, Khyentse had allegedly joined hands with the NGO employees to embezzle funds that were allocated for developmental works in the village. People supporting Khyentse also voiced their grievances against the *Chilaspas*. Norbu’s father, Rabgyas, was blamed for siphoning off rations from the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), a state-funded program that provided nutritious meals to children in primary schools. He was also blamed for his inability to sanction development budgets for Garkone despite being a *babu* (government employee) in Kargil.

Although the meeting started out on a calm note, it soon turned loud and acrimonious. Khyentse's supporters spoke of his popularity with district and state officers. A supporter yelled loud enough to make sure everyone heard him: "Khyentse knows almost everyone in Kargil and everyone knows him. He is a good speaker and knows what he is talking about. He is the one who can speak in front of Kargilis." On the other hand, Norbu, who was a much younger candidate, was praised for his energy and enterprise. There were many others, however, who had no strong preference for either candidate. For them, the only thing that mattered was that the Councillor care for the poor in Garkone instead of "filling his own coffers."

Most villagers were tired of the *partybazi* in the village; the polarization, they claimed, was part of an ongoing conflict between *Sembpa* and *Chilaspa* that had "redefined itself over time." For Tawang dudo, however, the current conflict was far more intense. Recent conflicts seemed irreconcilable since they were not about land but about development. External development interventions had politicized relationships among villagers and reinforced inequities of wealth and entitlements. This is how Tawang dudo felt about development and the ensuing *partybazi* in the village:

People who have eaten will know how things taste. People who haven't eaten yet, how would they know whether the Council is going to be beneficial or not for the village? Be it *Sembpa* or *Chilaspa*, they have always fought and taken all the benefits. It is people like us who suffer and for whom the Council really doesn't mean much.

Tsewang dudo's seemingly indifferent response reflected his previous experiences with development. In his view, development was meant for a select group of people; only those who had "tasted" it before were familiar with its benefits. The metaphor of "eating" pointed to the ways development had encouraged "greed" and "self-interest" instead of redistribution, justice, and equality. In his view, only those who had "tasted" development were excited about the Council.

Since most development had arrived in the village in the form of "budgets" for the construction of *kuls* (water channels) and *nehers* (small irrigation canals), such projects had primarily benefited people with larger landholdings. Households with fewer landholdings ended up receiving little to no money. The situation was worse for landless families who were hired as contractual labor during summer months. According to Tsewang dudo, who owned very little land, development had heightened existing inequities by rewarding households who owned the maximum landholdings with generous benefits from the government.

Many other villagers continued to have faith in the promise of development. They hoped that the Councillor's seat could help Brogpas negotiate for better resources so their long-standing demands could be met. These demands included a village high school, a hydroelectric project to divert irrigation water to the Dha Thang, and, most importantly, the opening of their village to foreign tourists so Brogpas could generate alternate sources of income. Rather than secure state

funding for small-scale projects such as *kuls* and *nehers* that benefitted only a handful of villagers, the Councillor could demand bigger funds for village-wide projects. Many asserted that it was because of their unmet demands that Brogpas needed a Councillor who could stand up for their rights, someone who was educated, politically savvy, and articulate. And, hence, most Brogpa men and women did not consider themselves “qualified” for the position despite being critical of the ongoing struggles between *Sembpa* and *Chilaspa*. They continually expressed their disdain for the ongoing *partybazi* in the village even though they never volunteered to join the Council.³⁰

Several scholars have argued how the deeper politicization of “tribal” societies is often the result of conflicts of authority between traditional chiefs/headmen and modern political elites who attain power through decentralized autonomous Councils (Gassah 1997: 210, 214). For instance, in the tribal hills of the northeast Indian state of Meghalaya, the formation of the district Council, Gassah argues, challenged local tribal institutions by taking on most of their powers and functions. The formation of the district Council also created a new political elite who disrupted “rigid and strictly ascriptive” forms of power even though tribal societies were “by tradition casteless and classless” (ibid.: 207). In Garkone, however, the power structures were far too complex to allow for a neat division between “traditional” and “modern.” Khyentse, who had previously been the *nambardar* of the village and represented what Gassah would identify as a more “traditional” authority figure, possessed attributes that many believed would serve him well in his new role as the Councillor, for instance, his ability to speak well and strongly. He decried the *Surpunch* of the village because of his overt support to Norbu, not because he embodied a “modern” authority figure. All the *panches*, according to him, unanimously belonged to the other faction and therefore did not support Khyentse’s candidature. Khyentse’s faction was worried that if Norbu became the Councillor, “his people would be in all the important political positions” and would deprive Khyentse and his supporters of valuable funds and resources.

Therefore, the formation of the *panchayat* had already created multiple factions in the village when the elections for the Hill Council were announced. Rather than being the result of the incommensurability between “traditional” and “modern” forms of political authority, the ensuing *partybazi* was the outcome of modern forms of electoral politics in the village. Indeed, many Brogpas viewed the *panchayat* elections as a way to polarize the villagers and politicize relationships between kin and community. Unlike *kutodis*, where kin and neighbors did not compete for votes, elections forced people to compete against one another. According to Sonam: “*panchayat* and Council elections turn brother against brother,” drive a wedge among families, and politicize relationships that were previously based on friendship and solidarity (see also Gupta 2009).

Apart from the reasons mentioned above, the existing animosity between Norbu and Khyentse was also because NC and Congress, the two primary political parties in Kargil, were supporting different candidates to extend their influence over village and regional politics. Reflecting on how political parties and elections had divided the village into irreconcilable factions, Norbu said:

“*Ek hi jagah bahut sara power hai ab* [There is too much power in one place].” Party interference, according to Norbu, had complicated village-level politics, a factor that made the question of consensual nomination all the more difficult to resolve.

All these factors together formed the backdrop of the meeting at *changra*, considerably reducing the chances of reconciliation between Norbu and Khyentse. Soon after a series of verbal attacks against each other, Khyentse and Norbu along with the *nambardar* and some *panchayat* members, walked away from the *changra* to reconcile their differences. Since the issue seemed too sensitive for outside viewing, I chose not to be part of it. Norbu, when we spoke later, told me, “Monaji, I told Khyentse that I was not interested in contending for the seat. I have my school teaching. Why should I want to give up a permanent secure job for a post that will last only five years?” However, the villagers, he claimed, had forced him to contend for the nominated seat since Khyentse had been a partisan and a corrupt leader during his tenure as the *nambardar*. Norbu also blamed Khyentse for stopping the construction of the road within the village: “How can you talk of development if there is no road within the village? Since Khyentse’s house is close to the main road, he does not want to give away a portion of his land for the road.” Norbu also reflected on what he considered to be an important characteristic in a leader: “leaders have to sometimes sacrifice their entire wealth for the good of the community. Khyentse is not even ready to give away a piece of his land.” Khyentse, on the other hand, told me how Rabgyas, Norbu’s father, could never support Khyentse’s candidature.

Rabgyas knows if I become the Councillor, he can never indulge in corrupt activities. Had these people come to me straight and told me that they have a *varar zumot* [stomach ache] and can never allow me to become the Councillor, I would have stepped down. But these people indulge in *partybazi*; they create factions within the village by serving the interests of only a handful of people. I can never allow this to continue.

The meeting at the *changra* clearly failed and both Norbu and Khyentse vowed never to meet again to sort out their differences. Instead, they fought as separate contenders for the nominated seat. Because Norbu and Khyentse were unable to arrive at any unanimous decision, the village remained split into rival factions, which made their chances of securing the nominated seat even more difficult. Knowing full well that the inability to propose a consensual candidate would hurt their chances of securing the nominated seat, Norbu’s faction forwarded Kunzes’s name—one of the few women in Garkone with a high-school education—as a potential candidate from the village. In case the government decided not to nominate a Brogpa candidate for the “principal religious minority” category, Kunzes could potentially be nominated for one of the two seats reserved for female candidates. Norbu’s faction, however, only reluctantly forwarded her name after all their attempts at reconciliation with Khyentse’s group had failed to yield any favorable results.

Kunzes responded to her candidature with a mix of skepticism and excitement: "See, in Garkone, women don't do this kind of politics." Inquiringly, she looked at me and asked: "Should we talk about politics or not? Is it good to talk about it?" She was skeptical because no one else in her family could take on her household and agricultural chores while she was away. "We selected Norbu to be our representative. I don't know why and how my name has come up," Kunzes wondered.

Although Kunzes had more years of formal education than Khyentse, Khyentse and his supporters discredited her candidature by resorting to a deeply held patriarchal logic that considered women incapable of "playing high-level politics." "How will they ever talk in meetings or disagree with their political opponents?," many asked. However, this seemed to be the least of Kunzes's worries. Indeed, Kunzes rejected Khyentse's assessments outright, claiming that her overwhelming workload rather than her "inability" to speak explained her reluctance to join the political fray. Women, she explained, were responsible for most agricultural and household chores that made it harder for them to stay away from the village for extended periods of time. Since she did not live in a joint household with other women who could assist her, Kunzes was solely responsible for tending to her land and taking care of other household chores. However, Kunzes's situation was no longer an exception but was increasingly becoming the norm in the village. While the rise of nuclear households and other economic changes had reduced the size of individual landholdings, a monetized economy had feminized domestic and agricultural labor in the village, dramatically transforming the customary gendered division of labor (see Chapter 1). Women complained that while their husbands had become good at portering and other salaried jobs, they could now barely attend to domestic chores. According to Kunzes:

Men in the past were so robust. Look at our grandfathers. They would be herders and would go to the *nullahs* to do agriculture. They were the ones who plowed the land (*bahispa*) and sowed seeds. We used to do weeding (*ninthis*). They used to make fields (*dumbas*). They used to get grass from the *nullahs*. Now, other than a few men in the village, no one does all these things. We do plowing (*bahispa*), weeding (*ninthis*), sow seeds (*spaythis*) in addition to bringing water, firewood, and taking care of our goats.

The shift in the division of labor did not just entail an increase in women's workload or men's decreased "robustness." Although many men had taken on salaried employment (mostly as porters), men's minimal participation in the customary division of labor "had freed them to constantly fight and bicker over village matters," women argued. I was repeatedly told how "women fight too, but it is mostly over water, not over things that don't matter" (also see Gutschow, 1997). According to Kunzes, years of *partybazi* had prevented the men from doing productive work in the village, and women continued to suffer the results of men's petty politics:

We have to lug huge gas cylinders on our backs and carry them for miles because there is no road in the village. Women are constantly stealing water

because the customary system that allowed water to be distributed equitably among households was discontinued.

Despite her misgivings with the existing division of labor, Kunzes was reluctant to join the political fray because women's evaluations as moral actors depended primarily on their ability to take care of their land and to ensure that their fields were cultivated, fertilized, irrigated, and harvested on time. For instance, Yangdol, a young female in her early twenties with two young children, was often ridiculed for neglecting her duties. Her father complained that despite enlisting her in a reputed school, Yangdol dropped out after falling in love with a military recruit. But, despite wanting to marry early, she "failed to attend to her household and agricultural chores properly." Yangdol, just like Kunzes, had married into a nuclear household, and therefore, she was singularly responsible for most household and agricultural chores. Yangdol, however, relied on help from a Nepali laborer for which the villagers berated her. Her labor was considered important for a good harvest of barley or buckwheat, even though she had hired additional help. "Even the Nepali needs some supervision, otherwise he doesn't put in any work," many complained, pointing to how Yangdol's fields always looked "untended" and "neglected" (see also Maggi 2001: 86). Women complained that Yangdol took frequent trips to Leh to buy clothes or that she abandoned her fields because she was "bored." Yangdol was considered a "little out of her mind" (*mirgut*) because she did not understand the "value" of land.

Wynne Maggi argues how in the absence of inheritance rights among Kalasha women of the Hindukush, it is women's labor that forms the "material basis of their empowerment" (2001: 86). Indeed, Kalasha recognize how "women's labor, rather than land, is the limiting variable in agricultural production," a factor that enables women to view their labor as "valuable" and as an important aspect of feminine agency (*ibid.*: 86, 88). Just like Kalasha women, Brogpa women, too, used their extensive labor on the fields to craft their autonomous identities even when it perpetuated the unequal division of labor between men and women. Undoubtedly, then, Yangdol was an exception who refused to acquiesce to gendered norms of good conduct and propriety and who renounced an important resource that for most women was a source of autonomy and empowerment. For Kunzes, therefore, working tirelessly to ensure a bountiful harvest was as much a "burden" as it was a source of joy and empowerment. Leaving the village for a Councillor's job was hardly appealing to her.

Despite her initial reluctance, Kunzes decided to join the political fray. Norbu and his supporters treated her as the "last resort" to be used in case negotiations for the principal minority seat failed. Thus while at district and state levels, Brogpa culture was the rallying call for securing political rights, at the village level a different set of criteria were used to determine the ideal candidate. Distinctions of class, gender, and education were carefully considered as Brogpas debated the merits and strengths of possible contenders. But, unable to come to any consensus, the impasse between Norbu and Khyentse continued, considerably weakening Brogpa demands for a nomination. Kunzes's nomination did nothing to resolve the matters. Even district officials who were aware of the existing

political stalemate in Garkone refused to take Brogpa demands for a nomination seriously.

Indeed, over time, the impasse in the village worsened further as party differences between the NC and Congress fragmented the Council and made the issue of nominations an endless contest between rival political parties. The contest between the NC and Congress also spilled into the village and worsened the standoff between Norbu and Khyentse. Instead of blaming their narrow political interests for the continued impasse in Kargil or holding themselves accountable for reinforcing party-based politics in the region, however, most Councillors and political leaders blamed Brogpas for their “failure” to arrive at a consensus. In particular, Brogpa inability to select a consensual candidate was read as a sign of their “culture” and “character,” perceptions that further reinforced longstanding stereotypes about Brogpa “stubbornness” and political naïveté. Brogpas were referred to as *chandangs*—a derogatory label that portrayed Brogpas as “raw” or “uncooked,” pointing essentially to their lack of political vision and foresight. Instances from Ladakh’s complex political history—primarily from the time when Brogpas fought the kings to resist their social and political subjugation to more recent stereotypes about their inchoate religious identities—were once again invoked to discredit their preparedness for modern forms of politics. While Feroze Khan maintained that Brogpas were “simple” people who “deserved to be nominated,” for several other Councillors, Brogpas were too “straightforward” or *tamchik*, a factor that prevented them from engaging in the kind of diplomacy that was required to succeed in electoral politics. For instance, Kawang, an ardent supporter of Khyentse, once told me how he was instructed by a politician in Kargil to “keep his mouth shut” so he could keep his party secrets. Reflecting on this suggestion, Kawang told me: “It is important for us to learn how to play politics; keeping our mouth shut in order to guard our secrets is certainly one of them.” In addition to emphasizing their “unpreparedness” for modern forms of politics, Brogpas were claimed to be “stubborn” and “reluctant,” an “inborn trait” that led to internal schisms and prevented them from reaching a political consensus. So while discourses of “culture” and “difference” had contributed to their visibility in the political sphere—a dramatic improvement from previous years when Brogpa voice did not count due to their miniscule numbers—the politics of “difference” was also used against them. Councillors and political leaders who opposed their nomination cited their incapacity to act as consummate political agents, a claim that was based on their alleged inability to engage with the complexities of modern forms of politics. That they were *chandangs*—and, therefore, “raw” and “unprepared”—or too *tamchik* or straightforward became ideological tools to discredit Brogpa attempts to engage meaningfully with the ongoing politics of the Hill Council. Rather than enabling Brogpas to contest their marginality, then, the Council ended up reinforcing cultural and racialized stereotypes that had legitimized their exclusion from formal politics in the first place.

Brogpas, however, steadfastly held on to their demands. Instead of relying solely on tropes of “culture” and “difference,” Brogpas resorted to discourses of

loyalty, patronage, and sociality (*wafadari*, *farz*, *len-den*) to stake greater claims to the nominated seat.³¹ The following section explores how Brogpas, despite popular claims about their political unpreparedness and naïveté, were able to mobilize an altogether different strand of political discourse to strengthen their pleas for the nomination. They used specific historic and political moments as “proofs” of their incontrovertible loyalty to Kargil district, using established norms of patronage, obligations, and sociality to cut across party differences and strengthen their claims to the Council.

The politics of loyalty and inclusion

Brogpas’ decision to file their nomination as a principal religious minority was the outcome of a series of negotiations between Brogpas and Feroze Khan, a contender from village Silmoo, who wanted to win as the consensual candidate from his constituency. Since Brogpa villages fell under the Silmoo constituency, Feroze promised to forward their name for the principal religious minority seat in exchange for their consensual support for his election from Silmoo. Although Khyentse claimed that he could have successfully won the election against Feroze, it was Feroze’s goodwill and his promise of helping Brogpas secure a nomination to the Council (in the principal religious minority category) that had deterred Khyentse from contesting. For Feroze, who ended up being elected unanimously from his constituency, the Hill Council was the beginning of his political career as a young member of the National Conference.

The mood was upbeat when the elections for the Hill Council were announced for Kargil. As already mentioned, many contenders believed that the Council would “create participatory models of development not promote ideological and party interests.” Many first-time candidates had shunned their party affiliations for the sake of Kargil’s development. Despite the initial euphoria of enforcing an apolitical vision of development—one in which party differences would be shunned in favor of a unified vision of development—the Council soon split along party lines over the decision of electing its head, the Chief Executive Councillor (CEC). Qamar Ali Akhoo, a National Conference candidate, was declared the CEC although he was not a consensual candidate, a fact that his detractors resented. Qamar enjoyed the support of 14 elected Councillors while nine other Councillors were affiliated to the Imam Khomeini Memorial Trust (IKMT), an organization that fielded Asgar Ali Karbalai as their leader. While the NC supported Qamar Ali Akhoo, Asgar Karbalai had the backing of NC’s arch-rival in Ladakh, the Congress Party.³² No decision regarding the CEC’s position could be taken until elections were held in Zangskar, a predominantly Buddhist region that had boycotted the Hill Council elections because their demand for ten elected seats in the Council had been rejected by the government. Qamar’s continuation as the CEC depended primarily on the elections in Zangskar, and ultimately on whether or not the elected Councillors would choose to affiliate with the NC. The impasse over Zangskar also stalled any firm decision on the fate of the principal minority seat, although intense negotiations continued, shaped by conflicting

party politics, interests, and alliances. Thus, whether or not Brogpas would be nominated as the principal religious minority depended on the Council's decision, which, contrary to its promise of non-partisanship, had become yet another battleground for competing party interests and agendas. Indeed, the NC and Congress each supported Khyentse and Norbu respectively, although their support was uncertain and unreliable, making it much harder for Brogpas to decide on a consensual candidate for the nominated seat.

Therefore, whether Brogpa demands would be met or not was terribly unclear because the stance of the two rival political parties, the NC and Congress, was far from consistent. For instance, as per his promise to Brogpas, Feroze vigorously championed for Brogpa nomination to the Council:³³

Giving a seat to Brogpas is the only solution out of the political mess in Kargil. If we look at religion, then there will be many communities that will come up to justify their claims. Kargili Shi'as and Sunnis are already represented, Zangskaris will also be part of the Council through elections, and there is some representation from every other group. The only people who are not at all represented are the Brogpas. Since their population is small, it will never be possible for them to win the elections. Nomination is their only scope to secure an entry to the Council. Very few people in Kargil and outside knew about the exclusivity of Brogpa culture. They were categorized broadly as Buddhists. But the Hill Council has given them the opportunity . . . we speak about them in different meetings . . . different platforms . . . be it in front of the ministers, the CEC, the Divisional Commissioner (DC) . . . in the religious organizations of Kargil . . . we have reiterated that within the minority Buddhist community of Kargil we have a smaller minority of Brogpas whose claims to representation are justified.

Feroze claimed that Brogpas were the only community that "would not be represented in the Council" without the nomination; therefore, it was only fair that Brogpas secured the nomination since "their population was too small." Feroze also claimed that Brogpas were not Buddhists, a fact "very few people knew" outside of J&K before the Hill Council politicized Brogpa culture and difference. Despite Feroze's support, many others within and outside the NC, including the CEC Qamar Ali Akhoo, did not support Brogpa appeals for a nomination. According to him, "the Hill Council act did not state that an ethnic minority could get a seat (since the seat was reserved only for a principal *religious* minority)." Furthermore, "Brogpas were relatively well-off compared to many other communities, so they did not require an exclusive representation at all."

Clearly, then, even with Feroze's overwhelming support, many Councillors (regardless of their party affiliations) disagreed that Brogpas deserved the nomination either because the Act did not permit the election of an "ethnic" minority or because Brogpas were "relatively well-off" compared to other communities in Kargil. That Brogpa land was relatively more "fertile" and that they had access to the military's "portering" jobs by virtue of their location on the border were used

as reasons to undermine Brogpa claims to the nomination. However, Brogpas and their supporters claimed that such comments were part of a “public transcript,” intended to distract attention from the obvious fact that nominating Brogpas was an unwise political decision (for both political parties) due to their inability to form a formidable vote bank for future assembly and MP elections.

As discourses of marginality and cultural rights proved insufficient to stake claims to the seat, and as their miniscule population once again threatened to exclude them from Kargil’s political sphere, Brogpas and their allies turned to shared social notions of *farz* (duty), *len-den* (reciprocity), *lihaaz* (patronage) and *wafadari* (loyalty) to justify Brogpa claims to the Council. In doing so, Brogpas transcended culture to situate their political agency within cross-cutting relationships of rights and obligations that bound local Councillors and Brogpas together in an affective universe of shared entitlements and obligations. As a result, Brogpas solicited the Councillors to render their duty (*farz*) in exchange for years of Brogpa loyalty to Kargil district.

Their affective allusion to loyalty was based on how Brogpas, despite being Buddhists, (and unlike other Buddhist communities) had, time and again, demonstrated their political support to Kargili administrators and politicians who were predominantly Muslim. One of the immediate events that both Brogpas and their supporters foregrounded to demonstrate their loyalty to Kargil district was the Brogpa refusal to boycott the Hill Council election despite repeated pleas by their Buddhist counterparts. Brogpas constantly reiterated in their applications to the government that Brogpas “had strengthened the election process by refusing to boycott.” In fact, as already mentioned, Brogpas unanimously elected Feroze Khan, a Muslim candidate for their constituency, who, in return for their political support, was obligated to fight for a nominated seat on their behalf. When I asked Brogpas why they had supported Feroze’s candidature, they deployed notion of *lihaaz* and *len-den*—relations of respect, patronage, and reciprocity—to explain their intimate relations with Feroze and his family through extensive trade and family relations that extended over two generations.

Such gestures of “loyalty” were also reflected in other political decisions Brogpas had taken in the past. In a region riven by religious disputes, Brogpas from Garkone had invariably favored Muslim candidates from Kargil in parliamentary elections instead of supporting Buddhist candidates from Leh district. The MP (Member Parliament) seat was considered to be one of the biggest contentions between Buddhist-dominated Leh and Muslim-dominated Kargil. Political leaders had repeatedly demanded two MP seats for Ladakh in order to ease the existing religious tensions in the region. However, since this demand had not been met, the MP elections were highly politicized. Indeed, Kargilis believed that Buddhists, especially those from Zangskar, invariably favored Buddhist candidates from Leh. Therefore, Brogpa support for Muslim candidates was read as a clear sign of their incontrovertible loyalty to Kargil. Moreover, Brogpas refused to participate in the social boycott that was issued by the LBA against Ladakhi Muslims during the peak of Buddhist-Muslim tensions in 1995. Although based on their precarious position as a religious minority, Garkonepas

used their refusal to participate in the social boycott as a strong statement to prove their “loyalty” to their district.

Such isolated, albeit consistent, gestures of loyalty towards Kargil became significant bargaining tools for Brogpas at a time when intense negotiations were underway for the nominated seat. Feroze’s claim that it was his *farz* (duty) to fight for a nominated seat on behalf of Brogpas for which multiple other ethnic and religious groups were also vying must be situated within the context of new political sensibilities forged within decentralized and politically intimate state structures where affective ties and loyalty to the district were significant criteria for political office. Brogpas thus mobilized their historical and contemporary claims to loyalty at critical junctures to remind and urge the Councillors to “act” on their behalf. Brogpa understandings of rights emphasized their “distinct culture” but also modes of sociality and interconnectedness with state Councillors. Thus, in addition to the discourse of cultural rights, the shared tropes of *farz* (responsibility), *len-den* (reciprocity), *lihaaz* (patronage) and *wafadari* (loyalty) became alternative political idioms through which Brogpas staked claims to the Hill Council.

After my return to the US in August 2004, Brogpas and other contenders from Kargil continued to negotiate for the nominated seat with the Councillors and the state government. Despite the “culture rights” discourse and its validation by several Councillors and state ministers, and despite their affective claims to loyalty, Brogpas failed to clinch the nominated seat. The state government, run by the Congress-led coalition, was attempting to create a Congress stronghold in the region for which they received overwhelming support from the Buddhists of Wakha-Mulbek. Given their miniscule population in Kargil, Brogpas were no match for the Buddhists of Wakha-Mulbek who were ultimately nominated for the category of the principal religious minority.

The healing touch policy of the Mufti government created new political imaginaries of inclusion and belonging, promising ethnic and religious minorities of Kargil a stake in their progress and development. Yet, the Hill Council and its overwhelming reliance on party politics—despite its initial rhetoric to shun politics for the sake of development—once again favored “population” as the only legitimate way to participate inclusively in Kargil’s mainstream politics. As such, the Hill Council could barely escape the constraints of procedural democracy or truly *heal* an “ailing national/developmentist state” (van Beek 1999). Discourses of “difference” and “culture” were overwhelmingly politicized, although they ultimately failed to create a viable space for minority groups like Brogpas in Kargil’s democratic politics.

Conclusion

The chapter argued that the creation of the Hill Council in Kargil—part of Mufti Sayeed’s healing touch policy—was meant to ameliorate historic regional disparities between Ladakh and Kashmir by extending opportunities for development and empowerment to politically disenfranchised border communities. Yet,

not unlike in India's northeastern states, where discourses of participation and decentralization legitimize "non-threatening expressions of cultural identity" at the expense of silencing dissenting political voices, in Kargil, too, the Hill Council was deeply imbricated in the complex politics of identity and territory (Nardi 2008, quoted in McDuie-Ra 2009: 318; see also van Beek 1999). The Hill Council was Mufti Sayeed's response to propositions by the RSS-VHP backed groups that threatened to splinter the state along regional or religious lines. It was also a strategy to diffuse Buddhist demands for a UT status and quell incipient Shi'a Muslim aspirations for the merger of Ladakh with Baltistan, Gilgit, and Skardu.

Despite its larger territorial politics, the Hill Council promised inclusion and development to religious and cultural groups in Kargil who needed Mufti's healing touch to counter years of partisan state politics. Discourses of care and healing became widespread registers of rule and governance as Mufti Sayeed vowed to reduce the "trust deficit" between Ladakh and Kashmir by "winning people's hearts and minds."³⁴ Such assertions, however, were much harder to uphold in practice.

Since the Hill Council was premised on discourses of plurality and multiculturalism, Brogpas used popular stereotypes about their distinct racial origins and their quasi-Buddhist identities to demand their inclusion in the Council. The Hill Council, it was clear, had established an ideal platform through which culture came into a complex dialog with politics, an articulation that opened the possibility for Brogpas to challenge their exclusion from Kargil's political sphere.

And, yet, exaggerated claims of cultural authenticity were hard to sustain in practice. As the politics around the nominated seat intensified, Brogpas resorted to coercive tactics such as *chatpa* to enforce conformity with what they perceived to be "authentic" Brogpa culture. Such repressive mechanisms created several social and political schisms within the village as debates around "authenticity" separated *khaas* from *sapas* Brogpas. The prolonged and inconclusive dispute between Khyentse and Norbu divided the society even further.

The administration used the pretext of existing internal schisms to undermine Brogpa demands for a nominated seat, although such divisions were sustained and even encouraged by political parties, invested in extending their sphere of influence over Brogpa villages. In the end, the agenda of NC and Congress parties to prop up different Brogpa candidates was futile since Brogpas did not constitute a formidable voting bank. Both parties were ultimately interested in supporting Buddhist candidates from Wakha-Mulbek who constituted a larger vote bank for future assembly and MP elections. Given the prominence of party politics in the Council, population eventually trumped other criteria for political office. Therefore, contrary to its promise of remaining "autonomous" and protecting "development" from Kargil's petty politics, the Hill Council remained firmly anchored in party and population politics.

In a context where their miniscule numbers were insufficient to constitute an effective voting bloc, and discourses of cultural difference and loyalty failed to secure them substantive political rights, Brogpas relied on other forms of claim-making in the post-war period to constitute their political subjectivities and

renegotiate their inclusion within the wider body politic. Instead of relying solely on their culture or their loyalty to Kargil district, Brogpas relied on stories of wartime labor and heroism to stake claims to an inclusive citizenship. In doing so, they transgressed Kargil's domestic and regional politics to align themselves with the larger national order. Whereas tropes of cultural difference had excluded Brogpas from Kargil's political sphere, tales of war bravado, heroism, and national service incorporated Brogpas fully into highly militarized forms of war and post-war labor (Gill 1997). Much more marked during and after the Kargil war, the co-optation of local labor and resources by the military established a post-war political economy in which Brogpa deployment as spies, porters, and recruits became highly routinized. For Brogpas, participating in the institutions and ideologies of militarism became a way to constitute themselves as ideal citizens, to embody the nation as well as stake claims to its promise of rights and citizenship.

3 *Pajlus, porters, and heroes*¹

Despite its “limited” scale, the Kargil war captured the national imaginary like no previous war had.² The Indian media played an instrumental role in “glamorizing” the Kargil war by screening images of “heroic deaths” and “martyred soldiers” (Aggarwal 2004; Jamwal 2004).³ Triumphant images of soldiers fighting to reclaim India’s strategic mountains and peaks worked to legitimize the war as “just and necessary” (Chatterji 2004: 114). The media acted as a mouthpiece of the BJP-led coalition government while the Kargil Review Committee Report celebrated the fact that “the media coverage, especially over television [had] bound the country as never before” (ibid.: 114).

Earlier that year, when the war was at its peak, I was in Banaras, a sacred Hindu city in North India. Throughout the city, people had set up booths to collect monetary donations for Kargil, a place that had suddenly burst into their consciousness through mediatized representations that portrayed it as a territory under the siege of Pakistani intruders. Several groups of Hindu ascetics, in their saffron robes, unkempt hair, and their *khadauans* (wooden sandals), were preparing to leave for Kargil, to assert Hindu India’s sovereignty over a place that did not normatively fit into their scheme of “Akhand Bharat—the one India of Hindus” (Bhagavan 2008; see also Menon 2010). The war, however, had triggered “devotional allegiance” to the nation in its “essentialized feminine form” (Aggarwal 2004: 121; Bénét 2008: 13).⁴

In 1998, a year before the war, the BJP-headed government in India had conducted a series of nuclear tests to counter years of “effeminate” Congress policies that had allegedly rendered the nation weak and vulnerable to threats and future attacks from its neighbors. Pakistan followed suit soon after.⁵ When the Kargil war broke out in 1999, the subcontinent teetered on the brink of a nuclear disaster as the possibilities of a first-ever nuclear confrontation between India and Pakistan became all too real. The threat was finally averted when the US President, Bill Clinton, intervened to avoid the escalation of the conflict into a “nuclear cataclysm” (Bisaria 2009: 2). Although Bill Clinton’s “coercive diplomacy” stopped the war, his urgent interventions internationalized the Kashmir imbroglio and lent it a newfound urgency in international debates on geopolitical peace and stability (ibid.).⁶

The Kargil war only lasted three months and was limited to the mountains and valleys of Kargil. Its implications, however, transcended national boundaries. But while military strategists the world over have widely discussed the logistics of the Kargil conflict, and while they continue to draw lessons in high-altitude combat or use the Kargil case to devise effective tactics for low-intensity conflicts, the implications of the war for local communities have received scant attention (see Lavoy 2009).⁷ The “reality of life on the frontlines” is messy and chaotic, but often also the most “silenced” (Nordstrom 1997: 7). This chapter is an attempt to break some of these silences and foreground the human experiences of the Kargil war. Most importantly, this chapter is an attempt to question official delineations between wartime and peacetime, pronouncements that erase the enduring effects of wars long after they are over.

Quite contrary to its popular conceptualization as a “limited” war, the Kargil conflict had long-term implications for Brogpas who found themselves in the midst of a political maelstrom as both innocent victims and active collaborators in the Indian army’s drive to evict Pakistani troops from Indian territory. The military forcibly occupied Brogpa land in the *nullahs*, raised regiments of temporary porters to carry essential supplies to high-altitude border posts, and employed villagers as spies or informers to track suspicious people and test loyalties (see also Aggarwal 2004: 217). Their routinized tasks dramatically transformed their categories of work and labor and aligned Brogpas firmly with the tasks of wars and war preparations. Ravina Aggarwal has directed our attention to the numerous ways in which border communities in Ladakh serve as “sentinels” for India, willingly offering their labor and resources to defend the nation even as their contributions are erased in the broad strokes of history (ibid.: 13, 17). Not unlike other communities on the Line of Control (LoC), Brogpas, too, became indispensable to salvage India’s sovereignty in a war the Indian army was unprepared to fight both militarily and psychologically.⁸

While the exploitation of Brogpa land, labor and resources reinforced the military’s combat capabilities, it also strengthened a militarized order in which ideas of citizenship, and nationalism and patriotism were thoroughly reworked to sustain the military’s war and post-war agendas in Kargil. The project of militarized nationalism, therefore, did not just involve “authoritarian imposition” (Moon 2005: 43) but also a profound reconfiguration of Brogpa aspirations in relation to the nation and their place in it. For Brogpas, who had remained on the peripheries of Kargil’s social and political life, participating in militarized forms of labor became a way to constitute themselves as ideal citizens, to embody the nation as well as stake claims to its promise of rights and citizenship.

This chapter first explores how Brogpa labor provided a crucial tool to sculpt the “body of the nation” on India’s frontiers (Weiss 2001). I do so by engaging with the figure of a war hero/first informer, an exalted status that the military attributed to Norboo—a middle-aged Brogpa man—who was the first person to inform the military of the Pakistani presence in Indian territory. The figure of a war hero became a potent symbol of loyalty and national service for the military in the post-war period. Norboo was celebrated in multiple social

and political forums, media outlets, and in military and government circuits, a celebration that asserted India's undisputed hold over its borders. In the second section, I examine how Norboo's excessive glorification allowed the military to downplay (and even erase) the routine incorporation of civilian populations into everyday forms of military labor. Brogpa contributions through portering, espionage, and wartime enlistments were central to the military's project of national sovereignty, although these were hardly acknowledged. Yet, Brogpas did not entirely resist their routinized incorporation into the military since wartime and post-war labor was pivotal to Brogpa economy and their claims to a fuller citizenship.

Although grounds for a more inclusive citizenship, militarized labor was deeply gendered. In the third section, I explore how wartime labor resulted in new and emergent forms of masculinities, those that were deeply tied to ideals of wars and combat. In the fourth section, I explore how women, although not visibly tied to the militarized economy, were instrumental in creating and sustaining a homefront through their participation in activities widely recognized as domestic, for instance, growing fruit and vegetables for the military or routinely carrying food to the battlefield. Although on the peripheries of what Moon (2005) calls a "militarized modernity," Brogpa women engaged in new categories of agricultural labor to sustain a militarized order and renegotiate their gendered subjectivities. In the final segment of the chapter, I return to the figure of the war hero to demonstrate the economic and ideological disparities such a status created for a community heavily reliant on military patronage and largesse. Exalted forms of post-war citizenship were linked to material rewards that reinforced differences of class, gender, and status within the village. Such differences were dramatic and profoundly undermined existing relations of community and interdependence among Brogpas. Ultimately, existing conflicts around material rewards and wartime accolades hardly questioned the value of militarism but further aligned Brogpas with the projects of defense, national security, and territoriality.

Narratives of a war hero

Norboo Namgyal was 38 years old when the war broke out. He was living a life of quiet anonymity as a herder (*pajlu*) and farmed occasionally on his meager landholdings. When he was young, his Muslim father, like several other villagers, had migrated to Garkone from Hagnis, a village in the *Chigtan* block of Kargil district. Norboo did not have enough landholdings, so he was responsible for herding village livestock to highland pasturelands where he stayed for several weeks at a time. Since most of these pasturelands overlook the India–Pakistan border as well as nearby Pakistani villages, he might even have interacted with villagers across the border and surreptitiously exchanged food items with them, social exchanges that were discontinued after the demarcation of the Line of Control (LoC) in 1948. Subsequent wars and the onset of insurgency in Kashmir further curtailed the cross-border movement of people and commodities and made border transgression the most egregious violation of state sovereignty.

In 1999, while grazing his animals in the *Jubbar nullah*, Norboo spotted several groups of men in black Pathan suits. Accompanied by his brother, Tstring, and his neighbor, Norphel, the three villagers also saw makeshift military bunkers filled with unused cans of food.⁹ Their Yaks, too, had gone missing. Suspecting these to be signs of Pakistani intrusions, they returned to Garkone, terrified.¹⁰ According to Norboo's version of the story, unlike his peers who feared the military, Norboo gathered all his courage to report the incident to the 3 Punjab regiment in Batalik, the closest military unit stationed around 6 miles from Garkone. Army officials who refused to believe Norboo treated him harshly. After what seemed to be an endless series of inquiries, the Indian army dispatched patrolling parties to ascertain the truth of Norboo's claims. Once his story was confirmed, the military awarded Norboo the title of the "first informer," a title that earned him several cash awards and accolades. The media followed suit. Norboo became a publicly acknowledged "war hero" as journalists wrote about him extensively, using his unprecedented bravery to celebrate Indian patriotism in the nation's remotest corners. "Namgyal's story illustrates that the best guardians of the border are its people," reported Praveen Swami (1999), a noted Indian journalist, who joined several others in applauding Norboo for saving Kargil from falling into the hands of Pakistanis. In a context where national pride was at an all-time low, narratives of Norboo's "bravery" served as an antidote to India's emasculation by Pakistani soldiers who had dared to violate its boundaries. Norboo became the "unsung hero" (Singh 1999) from Batalik who exemplified that the virtues of loyalty and service were the undisputed cornerstones of good citizenship.¹¹ Even army personnel who privately had ridiculed Norboo for hogging the spotlight were compelled to acknowledge him publicly. "I am writing to put on record our appreciation for [the] dedicated work and service to the nation by Shri Norboo Namgyal . . . his dedication and spirit have made him a respected member of the country and a true citizen," wrote an army major in his certificate of appreciation for Norboo. In yet another letter issued by the military subsequently, Norboo was praised for his "outstanding contributions" and his "indomitable spirit of devotion to duty."

In addition to becoming celebrated symbols of a valiant masculinity that nations rely on during times of crisis, war heroes serve a more important purpose, as de Mel (2007) reminds us. States use the "semiosocial site of a war hero" to reduce the complex *mélange* of human experiences to hegemonic tropes of bravery and dedication (ibid.: 115). The heroic replaces the vulnerable as everyday fears and tribulations of war-torn populations are consistently ignored and even silenced. What remain are highly glorified accounts of loyalty and war bravado, narratives that undermine the fact that wars are fundamentally violent and scary.

Despite his decision to inform the military, Norboo recalls being overwhelmed with immense fear and uncertainty. This is how he described his experience the night before he was to accompany 3 Punjab on their patrolling mission to the Jubbar *nullah*:

I couldn't sleep that night. I was thinking to myself . . . what if they were just hunters from other villages? What if we find nobody in the *nullah* tomorrow

morning? My fears worsened because of the rainfall that night. The rain would wash away all the footprints. I had no proof that these men were there. If they found nobody, they could even shoot me because it was no joke to claim that Pakistanis had entered India without the Indian intelligence having the slightest inkling about it.

Fortunately, army officials confirmed Norboo's preliminary reports of Pakistani presence in the *nullahs*, and realized, to their utter shock and embarrassment, that the Pakistani army had indeed occupied several key strategic positions on the Indian side. Norboo's initial fears of being targeted by the Indian military subsided when his "first informer" status won him many favors, including letters of appreciation that he proudly displayed on the walls of his recently constructed house, several cash prizes, a salaried job as an informer, free schooling for his children, and clothes and ration for his entire family, all of which contributed to his newfound social, political, and economic standing in the village. The military also installed in Norboo's house a phone-line, the only one in the village, which established Norboo's direct line of access to the army brigade. Norboo's new job was to alert the brigade of possible "enemy" intrusions into the village or report any suspicious or untoward activity in the cluster of villages that fell under the brigade's command. Norboo was also the first one to learn of upcoming Operation Sadhbhavna events in Garkone and the surrounding villages (Figure 3.1).



Figure 3.1 Sadhbhavna event in Dartsigs village. Source: Author, 2009

The first informer status changed Norboo's life in more ways than one. Sporting his army fatigues and shoes, Norboo invariably talked of his "ignorance" and "illiteracy" before the war and asserted its importance for opening him and other Brogpas to new ways of living and being:

You know, I got nothing from the civil government until the war. I am sure educated people in the village and the district got a lot of money from the government. But I certainly did not. The only kind of benefit I have received from the civil government has been the relief money in the post-war period. Moreover, once soldiers started coming to the village frequently, people became more conscious of hygiene and cleanliness. We also got more job opportunities through portering and recruitment.

Even as his contributions were depicted in the mainstream media as an unequivocal triumph of Indian nationalism, Norboo complained about receiving no benefits from the "civil government until the war." Soon after the war, he appeared in widely circulated Indian newspapers and TV channels and was congratulated by the Defense Minister of India, George Fernandes, with a cash award of 50,000 Indian rupees. Norboo, however, demanded better rewards for his wartime contributions. He took frequent trips to Leh and Kargil to remind civil officials that without his timely intervention, Pakistan would have settled in key strategic positions and made deeper incursions into Indian territory.

Norboo was not the only one who used his war hero status to renegotiate his place within the nation. Long after the war was over, the national media continued to use Norboo's story to deride the Indian government's reconciliatory gestures towards Pakistan. For instance, after the terrorist attack in Bombay in November 2008 and months before the tenth anniversary of the Kargil war, the Congress government was repeatedly blamed for its soft posture toward Pakistan despite its continued untrustworthiness as India's neighbor. According to a military blog written in 2009, right before the tenth anniversary of the war:

Pakistan's strategy was to occupy dominating positions at heights between the Line of Control and the Srinagar-Kargil-Leh National Highway, 1-A. The broader aim was to isolate the Ladakh region from the rest of India and alter the status of LoC for strategic gains. But for the fact that a cowherd, Norboo Namgyal, from the village Garkone, close to the LoC, spotted six armed intruders making bunkers on the Indian side and conveyed the information to the Indian Army, Pakistan would have possibly started to dictate terms to India. The point to remember is that the Pakistan Army cannot be trusted and for Dr. Manmohan Singh to say that we should trust Pakistan and verify whether promises are kept is to be very naïve.

(Kamath 2009)

As the national frenzy centered once again on the Kargil war and on Pakistan's role in abetting cross-border terrorism, Norboo Namgyal appeared in the media

as a “cowherd” who saved India at a critical time and yet remained a “face in the crowd.”¹² Prodding the government to take a harsher stance against Pakistan, Norboo’s bravery was used to mock the effeminate policies of the Congress government, while constant allusions to his “illiteracy” derided Indian intelligentsia’s reconciliatory gestures toward Pakistan (Joy 2008).

For Norboo, who remained dissatisfied with the government’s response to his national contribution, his flash appearances in the media made him adept at speaking the vocabulary of the nation. In several reports that he submitted to the government, Norboo routinely mentioned how “the nation needed to be thankful that a local herder had spotted the intruders and saved the nation.” While Norboo’s prompt decision to report to the Indian army had also been caused by the fear of plunder and mass killings by Pakistani soldiers, it was only in subsequent years that he began reinterpreting his reactions singularly within the frameworks of loyalty and national service. Proofs of national allegiance and patriotism were key to discussions of citizenship in Ladakh while wartime loyalty, even more than before, became a fertile arena for regional and religious contestations in the post-war period, asserts Ravina Aggarwal (2004: 217). Norboo’s disgruntlement therefore did not merely reflect his opportunism nor did it represent a transactional relationship between states and communities. Instead, his misgivings indicated the numerous ways in which questions of citizenship and belonging were thoroughly being reworked as communities offered their labor and resources to “save” a nation in crisis.

Norboo became the symbol of Ladakhi loyalty in no time; in order to further solidify their image as India’s “true patriots” (Aggarwal 2004: 45; van Beek 1998a), the Buddhist leadership in Ladakh enthusiastically supported Norboo’s claims to national acclaim and recognition. In 2008, Tsring Samphel, a member of the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, sent a letter to the Defense Minister, A.K. Antony, requesting him to consider Norboo Namgyal for a prestigious national award:

Had the said Norboo Namgyal not seen and informed the army authorities in his locality of the unusual presence of dubious and suspected human activities on the high mountain pastures areas in his village, where he happened to be in search of his lost Yak in the beginning of May 1999, the Pakistani intruders could have [wreaked] havoc in the [following days]. The Pakistanis could have encroached further into our areas, very near to our strategic and vulnerable road links, bridges and Army locations. Mr. Norboo Namgyal was the first informer to the Pakistani rangers’ presence in our area in Kargil sector in 1999 and their nefarious design[s]. As such, the contribution of Mr. Norboo Namgyal is not less than that of Master Shirwani of Kashmir in 1947.

By comparing Norboo’s services to Master Shirwani, a Muslim loyalist from Kashmir, Tsring Samphel intended to direct the government’s attention to Buddhist communities in Ladakh whose wartime contributions were routinely ignored by the Indian government. Once again invoking Norboo’s “illiteracy” and his low

socio-economic profile, Tstring Samphel considered it unfortunate that the Indian government had failed to honor a true “son of the soil.”

Our government confer[s] due recognition to those who [do] extraordinary contribution[s] for the cause of our country, but it is unfortunate that Mr. Norboo Namgyal has not been given due recognition at [the] national level, even [when] he had to face torturous days from the 3rd to 12th of May, 1999 to escort an Army party in the high difficult areas where he had seen Pakistanis. He has been given a Merit Card in August, 2001, and a certificate of commendation by Maj. General DH Summanvar, VSM, General Officer Commanding, 8 Mountain Division in August 2002, which substantiate his contribution as a vigilant and patriotic son of the soil despite being an illiterate farmer.

It is obvious from these effusive reports that Norboo was considered the “patriotic son of the soil” who exemplified Ladakhi Buddhists’ indubitable loyalty toward India, a claim that separated Buddhists from the “untrustworthy Muslims” of Ladakh and Kashmir (van Beek 1998a). I was told that the Indian government’s enthusiastic support for a Kashmiri loyalist, who was an exception rather than the norm, seemed puzzling when Buddhist communities had consistently sacrificed their lives for the good of the nation. Likewise, Kargilis claimed Norboo as their own, a “shepherd from Batalik” who had once again proved their unflinching loyalty to India (Aggarwal 2004: 218).

Despite using Norboo’s newfound status to further their regional and religious agendas, Norboo became the quintessential symbol of national loyalty and an exemplar of heroism and sacrifice in the post-war period. Norboo’s first informer title, however, was hardly undisputed. Norboo’s fame and his easy access to resources created several factions among villagers who were deeply divided over the rightful ownership of the title. Many who felt that he deserved it, celebrated Norboo’s newfound status. Others were confounded. An entire village had contributed their services to the Indian army during and after the war, but, “why was the media so fixated on Norboo?” villagers asked. Many argued that Norboo’s contributions were not extraordinary within the context of years of land and labor that Brogpas had offered to sustain the military’s combat and non-combat operations in the region. In their view, the title of a war hero had reified the distinctions between wartime and peacetime and erased the massive and routinized appropriation of villagers for projects of defense and national security.

In the following section, I discuss how the Indian military routinely relies on civilian labor to fulfill its wartime agendas as well as maintain its operational and institutional strength during times of relative peace. I turn to stories that are ignored in mainstream media, but that populate people’s consciousness, shaping their larger claims to rights, belonging, and national citizenship. In particular, I discuss how villagers have incorporated militarized labor as an integral part of *khral*, a social arrangement that allows Brogpas to equally divide the burdens of obligatory and communal labor.¹³ In order to maintain their rights to buy

land in the village and participate in local elections for the *nambardar* and the *panchayat*, every household is obligated to participate in this labor-sharing arrangement. While *khral* includes working on joint village projects (such as constructing water-channels or contributing to religious ceremonies), it also includes delegating duties to meet the military's frequent demands for additional labor and resources. Ladakhis, Aggarwal argues, claim an Indianness that is profoundly shaped by their routine participation in wartime labor and their countless sacrifices on the border (2004: 13). Rather than imagining the nation only as a symbolic construction of an "imagined community" then, Brogpas, too, like many Ladakhis, forge a somatic and corporeal bond with the nation, one that is born out of their sustained labor on India's disputed borders.

Militarization of Brogpa labor

Lamchung was 16 when he fought his first war for India. It was part of *khral* (obligatory labour) in his village to assist the army during wars. Since he was the only young man in his family, he gave up school. Although the recruitment was temporary, the news of being employed by the Indian army was nonetheless exciting. While he was given the entire military uniform except the shoulder badge and the belt, the promise of joining the military after the war as a full-time *fauji* (soldier) kept his spirits elevated. As temporary aides to the Indian army, Lamchung and other Brogpa boys had to carry ammunition to high-altitude border posts. They also had to bring back dead and wasted bodies from the icy peaks of Kargil. He remembered going to dangerous posts like peak # 5000 in the middle of the night when the Pakistani soldiers could not spot him. He remembered with a shudder and delight the nights he went without sleep and food to carry supplies for the military. At 17, when I met Lamchung for the first time, he had failed his full-time recruitment test once. By the age of 21, when I went back to do my long-term field work, Lamchung had failed it five times.

Lamchung's story represents the experiences of many Brogpa men who acted as military aides during the Kargil conflict. Recruited to fulfill most non-combat operations—from transporting heavy ammunition to lugging food supplies and bedding to carrying dead and desiccated bodies of Indian soldiers—Brogpas, like other border communities in Ladakh, provided the Indian military the much-needed expertise and logistical support to conduct high-altitude warfare. Called upon for assistance by the Indian army since India's independence, Brogpas have routinely contributed their labor and resources to supplement the military's institutional and operational capabilities in a region that is widely perceived to be harsh and inhospitable. The proximity of the Kargil war to Brogpa villages, however, made it expedient for the villagers to share the burdens of the war. Those who refused to do *khral* either paid a fine amounting to thousands of rupees or, in severe cases, suffered a village-wide boycott. In certain situations, their village membership, which made them the benefactors of government benefits such as extra land, solar lamps, construction money for water channels, etc., was even revoked. The only members exempt from *khral* were older Brogpa men and

women who had established separate households (*khutu*) and were no longer obligated to contribute toward communal responsibilities.

The most common form of wartime labor was portering. Since the military required a huge consignment of local porters to navigate the difficult landscape of Ladakh, young Ladakhi men were recruited for the First Porter Company, a temporary unit of the Indian army that was disbanded soon after the war ended. Several young Brogpa men volunteered to join the Company while others were obligated to serve as part of *khral*. Regardless of whether their decision to join the Company was voluntary or obligatory, most men remember being driven by a “deep passion” to defend their country. Brogpa stints of *khral* created a corpus of shared stories and memories that Brogpa men and women narrated with immense pride and bravado:

We helped the army trace the body of Major Sarvanand in 1999 when they had given up all hope to find it in our *nullahs*. It was so hard to lift that body. His soul was sad, unhappy. We prayed to his soul and convinced it that the Pakistani soldiers had left. When we brought his body to the village, our women didn’t cringe. They brought flowers to dilute the stench of a rotting body.

Such narratives reflect how Brogpas mobilized customary forms of village communitarianism in the service of national interest and the extent to which they saw their wartime and post-war contributions as normative and routinized.

Wartime labor had long-term implications for Brogpa men who became deeply motivated to enlist in the military once the war ended. Several young men recall serving in the First Porter Company as a turning point in their lives:

I was assisting an artist in Leh when the war broke out. I was only 16 when I had to come back for *khral* since my father was too old to assist the army. Just like every other boy in the village, I did whatever I was asked to do. When the war ended, I continued to assist the military since they had established newer posts and required local assistance for lugging supplies. In 2001, I decided to join the army because I considered it to be the surest way to earn a stable income. My father resisted my decision since I was the only son and the most recent war had brought the realities of war close to home. I went all the way to Changthang with five to six other boys to participate in a recruitment rally. Luckily, I was the only one who was selected that day.

Thappa who was forced to return to the village for *khral* in 1999 decided to continue with his portering duties until he was permanently enlisted in the Indian army after a grueling written and physical test. Unlike Thappa who was obligated to join the First Porter Company, many others like Yuntan joined the Company voluntarily because the military “pretended” to enlist them permanently. This is how Yuntan recounted his experiences of joining the Company:

I had read about India and Pakistan in my schoolbooks, but everything changed when we fought the enemy ourselves. I was sent to Leh as soon as

the war broke out. After having worked in a hotel for a month, I heard of a recruitment drive in Leh and decided to try my luck. I thought I was recruited, but they brought me back to the village and assigned me to do portering. After three months, they asked me to leave. Since then I always wanted to join the army, but my parents were too scared. In 2001, however, I finally made up my mind and my family had to let me go. I think as a soldier, villagers respect you more. Although I miss home, I like it when I visit frequently and am respected by my friends and family.

Yuntan, like many of his peers, was deceptively enlisted into the First Porter Company under the charade of a permanent military recruitment. He was assigned portering duties in Garkone after he had cleared a recruitment test in Leh. Although terribly disappointed, Yuntan continued working as a porter because “the proximity of the war had made the threat of the enemy so real” that many young boys decided to assist the Indian army despite their misgivings at the time. While he did not enjoy portering as such, he fancied the military gear and the cash he earned. It was his participation in the First Porter Company that cemented his decision to enlist in the army in 2001.

Not unlike Yuntan, most army recruits cited the Kargil war, in particular, their participation in the First Porter Company, as their sole motivation to join the military permanently. The Kargil war was remembered less for its violence and more for its long-term implications for young men’s occupational choices. After the war ended, many young men enlisted in the army. Others who were too old to join or failed their recruitment tests took up portering as their primary occupation. In the absence of other avenues for employment, at least one member from every Brogpa household was involved in portering to earn a steady monthly income (see Table 1.1, on p. 37). Families unable or unwilling to send their men to high-altitude border posts hired migrant Nepali labor as porters.

Several Brogpa boys like Lamchung, however, were deeply upset by the charade of the First Porter Company. As the youngest recruit of the Company in 1999, Lamchung recalled the lavish praise he received from junior and senior officers for his bravery and patriotism. “Who knew I would be deemed unfit to join the military after the war ended?” lamented Lamchung. A young man of fragile build, Lamchung’s chest size disqualified him from enlisting. He tried his luck each time there was a recruitment rally in Garkone or in the neighboring villages. In the meantime, he and his friends who failed to enlist approached the higher authorities (the SDM, the LBA, and some military officers) in a futile attempt to expose the deception of the First Porter Company. Lamchung, however, was not too hopeful. “Now the army needs high school diplomas for recruitments. I don’t stand a chance anyway,” he said. In 2000, to boost their recruitments for the recently established Ladakh Scouts regiment, the military had relaxed the academic criteria for permanent enlistments. As soon as their quotas were filled, several men were rejected for not being sufficiently qualified, compelling many to serve the military informally as cheap sources of labor.¹⁴ Reluctantly, Lamchung started work as a full-time porter even though he continued to wonder why the military had rejected

him as a permanent recruit, especially because his physical limitations had in no way lessened his abilities to carry out dangerous work in 1999.

Stanzin, another First Porter cadet, joined the company during a recruitment rally held in Leh in which almost hundred men participated. Like Lamchung, Stanzin was lured by the prospects of a permanent job as a military recruit. He worked as a porter in the Batalik sector even before 1999, but he could have never imagined a war so close to home. After experiencing the war up-close and seeing his “nation under siege,” he decided to enlist, a decision that led him to the rally in Leh. Despite participating in some dangerous missions on the border, Stanzin, too, failed to qualify for permanent military recruitment once the war ended:

The day they gave me the uniform and conducted my medical examination in Leh, I thought I was being recruited into the army. One hundred people were picked to work for 11 Gorka Rifles on that day. They brought us to the Dha nullah where we were assigned portering duties. We used to carry ammunition and food on our backs since there was no transportation to high-altitude border posts. One day without giving us any details, they made us walk miles and miles until we arrived at a border post very close to Pakistan. In the dead of the night, we had to crawl to get to the post in order to avoid being seen by the enemy. When we finally arrived, we were ordered to haul an abandoned enemy gun from the post. We were initially told that there were some injured soldiers who needed immediate medical attention, so we were certain of returning the same day. Some of us were not prepared for the cold there. We were wearing our summer shirts; some of us were bare-footed. Ladakh Scouts and 11GR had failed in this mission. So, our officer told us that our enlistment in the army was assured if we brought the gun back to the military base. It was hard work to haul the gun and the heavy ammunition with it. There were twenty-one cases of ammunition and it took us three days to bring back the gun and the ammunition to the army base. After this we were taken to Yaldor, another border post, to stock up for winter. We were told that if we worked well, we would be recruited. So under the cover of darkness, we carried ration, oil, and steel-tops for army bunkers. We worked for three months and were paid \$90. However, the officer never fed us properly even when there was ration allocated for porters. As soon as the war ended, the officer was transferred and we never heard from him.

Notwithstanding their deep sense of betrayal, young men like Lamchung and Stanzin still aspired to join the Indian military. While it was the promise of a “good life” that they desired, it was also, as de Mel argues in the Sri Lankan context, a desire that was deeply nurtured by the ideologies of duty, loyalty, and nationalism (2007: 110). Carrying “ammunition and food” as well as dead and desiccated bodies of soldiers in dark, cold nights were acts that incorporated Brogpas fully into the geobody of the nation. Their labor deployed for sensitive wartime projects instilled in Brogpas a sense of pride and accomplishment that was deeply shaped by the ideals of loyalty and national service.

I argue that emerging tropes of duty, loyalty, and national service obscured the coercive nature of wartime enlistments and normalized the systematized deployment of local labor to serve the needs of defense and national security. While Brogpas normalized military labor by integrating it into their everyday routines such as *khral*, military strategies used the fluid distinction between “conventional wars” and “counterinsurgency operations” to justify the use of civilian porters during times of extreme national crisis. For instance, in 2004,

a week after the Army Chief, Gen. Nirmal Vij, ordered a ban on the use of civilian porters in counter-terrorist operations, military planners are struggling to put together a new support infrastructure for troops fighting in Jammu and Kashmir. Their main problem is not logistics, but the law. Government regulations prohibit the Army from raising regular companies of porters except at times when it is formally mobilized for war.

(Praveen Swami, *The Hindu*, Sept. 16, 2004)

Notwithstanding its regulations against deploying civilian porters in India’s counterinsurgency operations, the government allows the use of civilian labor during conventional wars. Under the pretext of “wars” and “national crisis,” the military can raise “short-duration porter companies,” in which masses of local men are recruited to supplement the military’s combat capabilities without receiving the benefits of military enlistment.¹⁵

Hence, the hoax of the First Porter Company in Ladakh was part of a wider corpus of military stratagems that allowed the systemic exploitation of particular bodies and landscapes to create a sustained and permanent “geography of sacrifice” along India’s borders (Kuletz 1998: 6).¹⁶ Indeed, the militarization of local labor and landscapes in Ladakh began long before the Kargil war, right after India’s partition in 1947 and the subsequent occupation of Ladakhi villages by Pakistani raiders, popularly known as the *Kabayilis*. While the Kargil war brought the military closer to their villages, Brogpas invariably spoke of the Kargil conflict as part of a larger continuum of wars and violence. However, unlike tales of loyalty, bravery, and sacrifice that younger Brogpas reveled in, older Brogpas recalled the times when militaries were deeply feared. For instance, Rinchen dede, an older Brogpa woman recounted how “Pakistani raiders looted and plundered us in 1948 and 1949.”¹⁷ We were equally scared of the Indian military and would immediately hide behind boulders if we spotted an army patrol in our village.” Several others, such as Zom dede, an older lady who distinctly remembered the events of 1948/49 and 1971, compared her previous experiences with the events in 1999. According to her, other than using more lethal bombs and paying a nominal allowance to hired porters, the military’s expectations from border communities had not changed much in the past 50 years:

My father was the *nambardar* when *Kabayilis* from Pakistan invaded our territory in 1947. They stole our Yak, our goats, as well as our *hui* (turquoise). My father was responsible for going door to door in the village to find young

men for portering duties. If people resented, the army would beat them and enlist them forcibly. Some would hide and others who couldn't hide had to undergo terrible hardships. Those days it used to be much colder than it is now, there was more snow, more ice. Some people used their cattle (*dzos*, etc.), but others had to lug all that weight on their backs. People who ran away were discovered and beaten by the military. Once Jurgom kakei [Zom's cousin sister] fought with the Commanding Officer because he did not allow her husband to return from his portering duties. Things are slightly different now. Although we render the same duties, we are paid money by the military. The bombs, however, are more powerful, and the guns are bigger.

Zom dede recalled that Brogpas were not particularly willing to engage with forced military labor until the 1970s. The military did not consider local services to be voluntary and countered isolated instances of resistance with beatings and coercion. Brogpas are now nominally paid for what used to be *corvée* labor, a shift that has succeeded in normalizing military labor as routine and less exploitative. As an increasing number of Brogpas now participate in the military as hired labor, the militarization of bodies on India's frontiers is achieved through the institutionalization of wartime labor as paid and voluntary.

Yet notwithstanding its monetary rewards, younger Brogpas also associate their wartime labor within national tropes of patriotism, valor, and sacrifice instead of situating it within the prolonged history of wars and violence in the region. Zom dede's memories, when read against the narratives of younger porters and recruits, underscores how perceptions of wartime labor have dramatically shifted over the years: while its coercive nature is increasingly recast within new idioms of nationalism and patriotism, wartime labor is simultaneously linked to prospects of employment and income generation.

This section explored how the military has consistently exploited Ladakhi labor and resources to serve larger national and territorial interests. Brogpas, like a number of border communities, adapted to these demands by accommodating wartime labor as part of their communal and obligatory work. Although paid nominally for their services, the routinized deployment of local labor exposes the military's perpetual reliance on certain bodies and landscapes to sustain the national projects of territoriality and security (see also Aggarwal 2004). Yet, participating in wartime labor as porters or recruits profoundly shifted people's "structure of feeling" vis-à-vis the nation. Brogpas imagined themselves as true and valiant patriots who had consistently offered their lives and labor in the service of India's defense and security. Even when their numerous services did not translate into permanent recruitment in the military, wartime labor allowed Brogpas to craft new forms of national belonging, citizenship, and identities; however, participating in the military as porters or recruits also produced significantly new conceptions of manhood and masculinity. Ideals of bravery, patriotism, and competence became deeply entrenched as Brogpas increasingly valorized militarized ideals of defense and security (Gill 1997), changes that I explore thoroughly in the following section.

Military masculinities

Discourses of national service and patriotism became central to Brogpa sense of self and collective identities in the post-war period. In particular, narratives of masculine pride and bravado became common, producing what Aggarwal defines as a “romanticized masculinity associated with war(s) and defense” (2004: 219). As already mentioned, in the years immediately after the war, young Brogpa men were deeply motivated to join the military; every other day a batch of young boys participated in recruitment rallies that were organized with tremendous fanfare and attracted anywhere from hundred to two hundred young men from the towns and villages of Leh and Kargil.¹⁸ Usually held in villages throughout Ladakh, recruitment rallies quickly became a significant aspect of Brogpa everyday life. Prospective recruits nervously waited to prove their “manhood” by passing the military’s rigorous physical test for recruitment. Perceived to be a rite of passage for young men, recruitment rallies were highly charged events in which bare-chested men squatted in long lines, patiently waiting for their turn to be interviewed by the stationed officer and tackle the physical challenges that awaited them. More than a mere test, these challenges were public displays of strength and endurance, and successfully cultivated new expressions of manhood and masculinity among Brogpas. Young boys who made it into the army spoke of their “good fortune” while others who failed asserted their “preparedness” for the rally:

I ran two and a half miles back and forth on a very steep slope; I also pulled beams and did other things that many others couldn’t do. I guess I had been working hard right from when I was young.

While young Brogpa boys used “martial performatives” to accrue new forms of cultural capital, such sensibilities were deeply exclusionary and heightened the distinctions between military and non-military masculinities (De Mel 2007: 24). The most iconic representation of an earlier form of Brogpa masculinity was the image of a herder (*pajlu*). With long braided ponytails, rubber boots, and a rustic way of life that signified their hardy work in highland pastures, *pajlus* braved the inhospitable terrain and the severe weather to tend to their goats and yaks. With the reduced number of goats and yaks in the village, herding was limited to one or two unemployed men who were derided for their illiteracy and for their regressive world-view. Instead, the figure of a recruit now represented an exalted form of masculinity, one that defiantly countered stereotypical conceptualizations of Brogpas as a “primitive” and “ignorant” people.

Although masculine aesthetics were quickly shifting, not every young man fit the militarized ideal of a “perfect” masculinity. For instance, Lamchung’s fragile build, which repeatedly marred his chances to enlist, was either the subject of genuine concern or deep ridicule in Garkone. Lamchung constantly strived to emulate his more successful peers by exercising regularly, participating in “masculine” chores, and refusing to contribute toward highly feminized tasks of agricultural labor. In 2009, when I returned to the village, Lamchung was working

as a day laborer for the BRO that recruited locally to save costs and speed up the construction work. He confessed that he had not given up as easily. He joined the BRO reluctantly after failing to join the J&K police force. Regardless of its lower status, his employment with the BRO earned him a monthly salary, solidifying his image as a “provider,” an important and emergent marker of manhood in the village. Despite their contractual employment with the BRO, many young boys aspired to join the military for the promise of upward mobility and long-term financial security (Figure 3.2).

Women in the village were deeply skeptical of the changes in the existing social mores and norms brought about by men’s aspirations to join the military or their unwillingness to do farm work. For instance, Dolkar, a 34-year-old Brogpa woman complained:

It is not so much about just working in the military; it is about how an increasing number of boys, even when they are not directly working for the Indian army, have begun defying social rules. If boys don’t get into the military, they still aspire for some form of off-farm employment. Consequently, they hardly ever contribute to important chores in the village. The village has changed in ways that is not always good for us.

Profound shifts in the customary division of labor became the subject of intense discussion in the summer of 2009 when a 24-year-old man who was employed as a day laborer for the BRO raped a 13-year-old girl from the village. The young



Figure 3.2 “Proud to be an Indian.” Source: Photo courtesy of Sewak, Kargil

man was chastised for victimizing the girl and “ruining her life.” However, after a series of difficult negotiations, the *panchayat* committee asked the man to pay a puny sum of 500 Indian rupees to the girl’s family. Severely offended by this decision, the girl’s mother decided to lodge a police case against the man in Kargil. The police officer on duty, however, declined to file the case and directed the family to pursue it in the nearest police station in Batalik. The mother finally dropped the charges because of considerable pressure from the village *panchayat* to resolve the dispute locally. This incident drew tremendous criticism from most women who felt that the *panchayat*’s decision would hardly deter such crimes from recurring in the future. Although critical of the *panchayat*’s decision, most women attributed this incident directly to the dramatic shift in the customary division of labor between men and women. Diskit, a young woman complained:

How will a small monetary compensation help the girl? These boys, I tell you. Either they will return from their jobs [military postings] and flaunt their clothes and sunglasses or they will stay here in the village and contribute very little to everyday activities. Basically, they have nothing better to do.

Worried that such socially inappropriate behavior undermined established social mores and made strident forms of masculinity more pervasive, Diskit expressed her deep-seated concerns:

You know, men have begun exerting more power over women. They very rarely contribute toward agricultural activities; instead they drink and play all day. Such incidents happen because young boys don’t engage in productive activities. They will work for some hours as wage labor or they will just sit around all day waiting to enlist in the army.

Brogpa men and women did not consciously attribute incidents such as rapes and domestic violence in the village to an increased militarization of Brogpa masculinity. Instead, changes in the social order that included a dramatic shift in the division of labor were held responsible for “freeing” younger men from agricultural chores and other social and communal responsibilities.¹⁹ As is the case in several Himalayan villages, the introduction of a market economy was one primary factor that has eroded the considerable degree of “flexibility and coordination” among members of Brogpa households, relations that were vital for the success of their subsistence economies (Mehta 1996: 181). Even when it was characterized by a gendered division of labor—for instance, women were customarily not supposed to plow or touch the *dzo* or herding was mostly a male activity (see also Aggarwal 2004: 192; Gutschow 2004)—the agropastoral economy of Brogpas relied a great deal on the mutual interdependence between men and women (Mehta 1996: 181). However, the beginning of a market economy created opportunities for off-farm employment for many men (see Chapter 2 for details). The increasing militarization of Brogpa society meant that young recruits and porters stayed away from their villages for extended periods of time. This

shift in patterns of male employment transformed the complementary nature of subsistence activities. Agriculture became highly feminized and young men—even if they failed to join the military—hardly ever contributed to farming or other agricultural pursuits. According to several women, along with widening the chasm between men’s and women’s work, recent transformations in labor patterns had transformed their moral universe: Brogpa men were more “wayward” and “less responsible,” characteristics that explained, in their view, the growing instances of rape and domestic abuse in the village.

Hegemonic notions of Brogpa masculinity were increasingly tied to participating in the institutions of the military that Brogpa women were rarely allowed to access. Nurtured through wars, bravado, and the incessant glorification of martial values, new categories of militarized manhood had clearly begun to emerge in the village. Such transformations solidified the distinctions between hegemonic and subaltern masculinities, strictly demarcated feminine from masculine spaces, and reinforced a strict division of labor between men and women. However, Brogpa women were not completely exempt from militarized labor. As the military increased its reliance on local farming to fulfill the requirements for everyday food and rations in the post-war period, feminized labor became an important tool to sustain the military’s operational and institutional capabilities in the region.

Dumbas and gendered labor

Feminist scholars remind us how nationalist regimes craft gender-specific demands to forge the contours of the body politic. Men serve the nation “out of the barrel of the gun,” while women become “living surrogates,” “bearers and nurturers of future citizens,” and thus the “embodiments of domestic responsibility” (Heng and Devan 1992: 349, cited in Ramaswamy 1998: 80). Indeed, as Sara Smith states, women’s marital choices in Leh are subjected to extreme forms of political scrutiny as processes of “geopolitical territorialisation” are mediated through the disciplining of feminine desire and comportment (Smith 2009, 2011). Intense regulation of women’s bodies and particular forms of feminine labor transform domesticity into an arena of governmental control and regulation.²⁰

Brogpa women provided the military key services during the war; other than reproducing the nation biologically, women took over most domestic responsibilities and upheld the morale of their men as they fought alongside the soldiers. Invariably, Brogpa women cooked and carried meals for entire battalions when they ran out of supplies in their high-altitude border posts. A year or two after the Kargil war, new and exacting demands on women’s labor became more normative as the military established a greater presence in the vicinity of Brogpa villages. In 2003, the military decided to stop the supply of fruit and vegetables from Chandigarh in order to reduce their transportation cost and use locally grown produce that was both fresh and less expensive. The military offered competitive prices for the produce and encouraged many Brogpa households to participate in these transactions. While Brogpas had planted turnips and apricots even before the war, not many had invested their labor and resources to plant other kinds of

fruit and vegetables. The incentive of a lucrative vegetable trade, however, prompted many to carve out small plots of vegetable gardens, *dumbas*, exclusively for vegetable farming.²¹ Although agriculture was already highly feminized due to the changes discussed earlier, women were solely responsible for tending to the *dumbas*. According to Samme, a young Brogpa woman,

Dumbas are exclusively women's work. We sow the seeds, weed several times per season, add fertilizers, and water the plants. From start to finish, it is our work. Previously, we used to grow potatoes only in our *nullahs*; now we grow them in the village as well. We can grow at least two to three different crops each season.

Dumbas contributed to women's workload immensely, especially because vegetables required more care and tending compared to the staple crops of buckwheat or barley. Women, however, used the growing disinterest of men in agricultural pursuits to carve out a strongly feminine space in which they decided the specific rotation of crops and efficient ways to organize their labor. Angmo's story is telling in this regard. While talking to Angmo's brother-in-law one day, I asked him about the crop that was planted on their land in Jodi *nullah*, a fertile highland around two and a half miles from the village. Sonam instantly said it was potatoes. Much later in Sonam's absence, however, Angmo confided in me:

You know I did not plant potatoes in that *nullah*. What does he know? He can't even walk up to the *nullah*. Potatoes require so much more labor, you have to weed it twice compared to buckwheat that requires one weeding per season.

Since Angmo's husband had joined the military, her relationship with Sonam was not very cordial. While her reticence to confide in Sonam could also reflect simmering tensions within a joint household, it also indicated women's increasing capacity to exert their rights over land, based on their sustained labor and an increasing accumulation of gendered knowledge. Scholars working in the Himalayas note how new cash crops and market-based transactions have contributed to women's disenfranchisement by preventing them from exercising direct control over their land and resources and eroding their customary role as repositories of local knowledge (Mehta 1996). Brogpa women, however, felt more ambiguous about such shifts. They certainly resented the hard work that planting and maintaining vegetable gardens entailed; yet they appreciated the monetary benefits of supplying vegetables to the army even when they had no direct control over household spending. Moreover, Brogpa women did not view *dumbas* solely from an economic standpoint. There was an element of pride and ownership that women expressed in relation to their newly acquired expertise to plant and maintain vegetable gardens.

A recent feature of their surroundings, *dumbas* represented how modernity and militarization had concertedly worked to reconfigure Brogpa labor and

landscapes. New vegetables that women planted in the *dumbas*—tomatoes, potatoes, eggplants, cauliflowers, cabbage, and chilies—signified the onset of a new materiality and world-view that reshaped women’s perceptions of land, labor, and productivity. While *dumbas* dramatically extended women’s workload, they also allowed women to express their feminine agency as expert farmers. Women were “productive” members of the body politic who played a key role in sustaining their households and foster their new identities as citizen-patriots. Indeed, the connection between food and nationalism for Brogpas was a significant one. Historically layered and politically salient, food has played a central role in how Brogpas imagine their national identities (Caldwell 2002; Wilk 1993). Just as their bodies and landscapes have consistently been used as “pedagogical tools” (Béné 2000: 205; Smith 2011) to solidify nationalist sentiments, the ready availability of non-indigenous food items—sugar, wheat, and rice in fair price shops that were set up by the Indian government as part of the Public Distribution System (PDS) in the 1960s²²—dramatically transformed Brogpa national sensibilities and consciousness. The quintessential gesture of a welfare state, fair price shops (or ration depots as they are popularly called) became sites through which the nation was viscerally imagined. For instance, Wangyal dudo remembered that:

He could barely get rice or flour until the 1950s. It was rare that someone from the village brought sacks of rice from Kashmir. The entire village would get to know that a household had cooked rice or *roti* [wheat bread]. On a daily basis, we used a lot of barley in our diet. I remember eating a lot of dried turnips. Although there was lot of meat and clarified butter, there was no rice, wheat or vegetables until the government started providing us rice, wheat and sugar at subsidized rates.

Although rice, wheat flour, and sugar were symbols of a newfound modernity that allowed Brogpas to establish a gastronomic unity with the fertile plains and hills of India, their emerging interest in *dumbas* reflected a sustained engagement with food as a metonym for nationalism. However, no longer just the passive consumers of subsidized food-grains, Brogpa women saw themselves as “farmers,” who invested their hard labor to subsidize the military’s expenditures on fruit and vegetables. *Dumbas* were therefore female embodiments of a militarized modernity and represented women’s newfound identity as “dutiful nationals” (Moon 2005: 21).

Although an important feature of their post-war economy, not all Brogpa households cultivated *dumbas* or participated equally in commercial transactions with the military. Many Brogpas complained often about delayed payments, an issue that discouraged them from investing their time, labor, and resources in their vegetable gardens. In the first season that lasted from June 2003 to November 2003 (see Table 3.1), Brogpas were paid promptly but subsequent delays dissuaded many from continuing to trade with the military.

Another issue that discouraged villagers was that the army’s supply trucks never waited for women whose houses were located farther from the road. The

Table 3.1 Quantity and price of fruits and vegetables sold from Garkone to the Cooperative Marketing Society (CMS), Nyemo for the season from June to November 2003

<i>Fruits and vegetables</i>	<i>Kilos</i>	<i>Per kilo price (Rs)</i>	<i>Total in rupees</i>
Ripe tomatoes	3,278	17.71	58,053.38
Green tomatoes	1,809	14.55	26,320.95
Potato, fresh	1,687	10.31	17,392.97
Bottle gourd	570	14.00	7,980.00
Apple	625	12.09	7,556.25
Carrot	530	11.66	6,179.80
Cabbage	471	10.80	5,086.80
Cucumber	192	22.68	4,354.56
Chinese W Bo (Dumus)	599	6.58	3,941.42
Turnip	500	7.22	3,610.00
Beans (fresh)	130	17.50	2,275.00
Pumpkin	331	6.10	2,019.10
Chili (green)	54	34.03	1,837.62
Onion	104	14.36	1,493.44
Cauliflower	102	14.60	1,489.20
Knolkhol	208	6.80	1,414.40
Spinach	50	8.88	444.00
Capsicum (bell pepper)	16	26.22	419.52
Brinjal (eggplant)	24	14.60	350.40
Radish	4	6.95	27.80
Total amount in rupees			152,246.61

Source: Village records, 2003.

responsibility to deliver vegetables to the supply trucks was predominantly women's, and their inability to do so led to heated arguments between husbands and wives. Even when women arrived on time, the army refused vegetables for which their quota had already been met. Despite their proclaimed intention to help the local economy, the army had to follow strict rules of supply and demand, constraints that compelled many to give up trading with the military. A recurring issue between the army and the villagers was to figure out ways to streamline the supply chain and bring the villagers in concert with existing market regulations. In one of the meetings organized by the army to address this problem, the lieutenant colonel stationed in the nearest army unit announced:

We have been buying vegetables from you for the last two years now. But we do want to use this opportunity today to tell you about some recurring problems with your supplies. We would like it if you could plant different kinds of vegetables because it makes it hard for us to buy the same vegetables from you over and over again. If all of you are selling us carrots or peas, how

much can we consume? Moreover, we can't keep eating peas and carrots every day. Therefore, we are asking you to sow a variety of crops.

Brogpas struggled to provide the army a wide variety of vegetables, mostly because of the short growing season and the inequitable distribution of good resources such as seeds and greenhouses. Because the military used narratives of bravery and wartime contributions as silent parameters to distribute gifts and other material resources, very rarely were people's actual needs or requirements taken into account. Providing good-quality seeds or greenhouses to a few households exacerbated tensions in the village rather than ensuring the year-long production of fruit and vegetables. Brogpas, however, resented the army's favoritism to certain individuals and households since it "ruined their customary system of resource distribution" and encouraged "unhealthy competition" among villagers. Not limited to the issue of greenhouses alone, the army's "benevolence" in other domains was often resented for disrupting Garkone's social and political order.²³ In particular, Norboo Namgyal's war hero status led to inter- and intra-household conflicts as the military solely depended on him to channel resources and other material entitlements to the community. Most men and women were also critical of Norboo Namgyal's glorification as the war hero since it conveniently erased their communal labor on the border. Apart from its profound effects on existing gender dynamics in the village, militarized labor created new socio-economic hierarchies among Brogpas. Most of these divisions crystallized around questions of unequal resource allocations that soured familial relationships and fragmented communal bonds of care and solidarity.

In the following section, I return to discuss the figure of a war hero, a status that contributed substantially toward Norboo's upward mobility and embittered his relationship with his brother, Murup. Their estrangement, although deeply personal, reflects emerging patterns of socio-economic hierarchies at the village level as well as wider changes in norms of sociality and community among Brogpas.

Militarization and social fragmentations

Norboo became a visible marker of emergent social and economic divisions within the village, created, in part, by the unequal distribution of favors by the military. In a context where memories of war and sacrifice shaped everyday life and constituted people's subjectivities in profound ways, Norboo Namgyal's war hero status created deep social and political fissures. Unlike Norboo, his brother, Tstring Murup, and Norphel, his neighbor, who had also spotted Pakistani incursions, received no public acclaim. While his public image was of a war hero, Norboo was deeply disliked by some villagers for hogging the spotlight and all the accolades and rewards from the military. Norboo's singling out as the only "civilian hero" did not just disregard their communal contributions, but also undermined their collective morale. As Lamchung put it, "We might never again offer our lives and services to the nation that has refused to acknowledge our services."

The visible markers of economic status that Norboo now possessed—a plot of land in Leh, a new concrete house in the village, better clothes, a salaried job, and a telephone—made the implications of his “first informer” status starkly apparent to those whose services remained unacknowledged. For instance, besides receiving an acknowledgement certificate from the army, Tsring Murup’s claims to be the “first informer” did not guarantee him access to material entitlements. Rather than directing his anger against the military, Murup instead blamed Norboo for his deceit and cunningness.

We are brothers, we were born of the same parents, lived in the same house for years, so it really hurts the ways he [Norboo Namgyal] deceived me. You know, right after the war, I received five thousand rupees (\$100.00) in the mail through an army commander who wanted to acknowledge me for my services in 1999. As soon as Norboo came to know, he burst into my house really angry and slapped me right across my face, blaming me for putting our entire family in harm’s way. He kept dissuading me from meeting with the army, but now I realize that he used to take oil and meat for them so that he could earn their favors.

Murup found Norboo’s “greed” for money and attention incomprehensible. “You know the government has enough to reward both of us, I don’t know why he doesn’t understand that,” Murup wondered.²⁴ Norboo was also blamed for hiding the certificate of appreciation that the military had issued to acknowledge villagers for their collective work in 1999. In a context where documents were tools of upward mobility and proofs of ideal citizenship, they encompassed a range of affective and instrumental meanings that far exceeded their bureaucratic character. Even as artifacts of state power, documents were effective points of entry for citizens to engage with the otherwise impenetrable state apparatus and lay claims to a range of rights and entitlements.

Notwithstanding Murup’s consistent attempts to convince the military that he too deserved the title of the first informer, Murup was hardly rewarded. He blamed Norboo for his ingratiating mannerisms and his consistent ability to keep the army personnel “happy and contented.” Despite the deeply personal nature of the dispute between Norboo and Murup, their misgivings indexed larger anxieties about access to resources in a context where economic opportunities for upward mobility were intimately linked to the military, and where the “traditional” sources of economic security, such as land and cattle, were increasingly becoming scarce.

Murup’s disgruntlement with the military was obvious, and so was the anger of many young men whose aspirations to join the military had failed. Such sentiments cannot, however, be reduced to “greed” or “self-interest,” allegations that became increasingly commonplace as the social fabric was torn asunder by the pervasive infiltration of the military in people’s everyday lives. Murup’s response was indeed an expression of new structures of feeling that emerged in the post-war period as Brogpas forged their political agency within the context of new rights and obligations. National service and patriotism became the catchall phrases used

by the media to celebrate India's hegemony in its remotest corners. Such tropes, however, also created spaces for Brogpas to redefine their terms of citizenship vis-à-vis the nation-state. For instance, many villagers proudly remarked that, unlike many border communities who fled their villages in 1999, Brogpas had stayed and helped the military fight the enemy. According to Namme:

We stayed right here through heavy shelling. We could have left too and temporarily lived in Leh where there was no fighting. However, we felt compelled to help the military and drive the enemy out. What we got in return was money for bunkers and blankets. Most people who did not know how to read and write applications didn't even get that.

Brogpas who fled the village were ridiculed for their cowardice. In fact, soon after the war ended, Brogpas forced their *nambardar* to step down since he had allegedly failed to set a good precedent for the village by fleeing to Leh. Despite their hardships, Brogpas' continued resolve to assist the Indian military reconstituted not just their subjectivities but also their expectations from a military that had overwhelmingly relied on their labor to fight a difficult war. For instance, Kawang, a local schoolteacher, noted how "Brogpas were almost half-*faujis* [soldiers]." To further reinforce his claims, Kawang narrated an incident that took place a year after the war had ended:

My wife and I had gone to see Captain Sri at the brigade headquarters. He was generous enough to invite us to stay for lunch at the *langar* [soldiers' mess]. However, when we were about to enter the mess, a soldier stopped us for our passes. I was deeply agitated. I told him straight up. You never wanted to see a pass during the war. What happened now? I then caught him by the scruff of his neck and took him to Captain Sri. He turned pale and was terribly scared.

Kawang's narrative reflects how Brogpa claims to certain rights and entitlements in the post-war period relied on specific articulations of national inclusion and belonging that were decidedly based on their sustained wartime labor. A dynamic social practice situated "within a much larger field of social practices and meaning productions" (Elliston 2004: 624), wartime labor allowed Brogpas to rethink their terms of inclusion and exclusion within the wider body politic. I was often asked to write letters to army commanders, regional and national leaders, and even the president of India requesting them to "reward" Brogpas for their dedicated service to the nation. On other occasions, Brogpas requested things from the military they needed on a day-to-day basis: rations, portering assignments, or hand pumps.

Wars are hardly thought to create rights-bearing subjects; however, in a polity where the politics of recognition animated mainstream political discourse and militarism was highly glorified, wartime contributions became an important avenue for renegotiating the terms of national belonging and citizenship. At the same time, the growing anxieties between Norboo and Murup were indicative of

larger historical shifts within the village that were not limited to the dramatic events of 1999. For instance, taxation imposed by the Dogra kings in the nineteenth century forced people to switch to a monetized economy while the colonial Land Settlement Act of 1901 privatized land, compelling Brogpas to reorganize their land, labor, and resources (Vohra 1989b: 22). As previously argued, the introduction of wage-labor and the ready availability of subsidized food further weakened social and community bonds of exchange and dependence among Brogpas that were crucial for their survival during times of social or natural crises. Although Brogpas appreciated the easy availability of food and money, they were equally skeptical of how such transformations were changing their way of life. According to Palmo dede:

Our lives have certainly improved because we don't have to work as hard for food or money. However, what is changed is the character of people. People were so much better before. If you had vegetables, you would share them with others. If someone didn't have apricots, they could walk into their neighbor's house and ask for some. Now if someone asks for stuff, people look down upon them.

Older Brogpas claimed that the steady improvement in their quality of lives had consistently eroded core human values of sharing and solidarity. Their romantic and nostalgic renderings of the past emphasized the ethic of sharing and redistribution despite vast disparities of wealth among Brogpas. Rituals of redistribution, such as *rail*, were specifically meant to distribute excess food among the villagers, I was repeatedly told. Tracing the origins of *rail*, Chokolokpa dudo recounted the story of Skitpalde, a wealthy man who would invariably escape to Nirdha in order to protect his goats from being stolen by the villagers:

His sisters who were wiser than him explained to him the futility of running away from his kith and kin. They advised him to hold a *rail* to give away ghee [clarified butter], *shono* [apricot oil], and his goats, all of which he had in plenty. This is how we lived. People who were wealthy would provide for the poor.

The contrasting narratives of Murup and Chokolokpa dudo reveal the loss of a communitarian social order that was based on an ethic of sharing and distribution. Rather than being just a “convenient reading of the past” (Dodin 2008: 28), such perceptions were rooted in dramatic shifts in the region's political economy. Since people now owned fewer goats and markers of wealth and status had shifted considerably, rituals such as *rail* had lost much of their symbolic and material significance. Instead, new categories had supplanted earlier sources of wealth and profoundly changed norms of Brogpa sociality and community. Contributing further to these transformations was the intense militarization of Brogpa society in the post-war period. Coupled with the military's deeper involvement in everyday affairs such as education and healthcare (see Chapters 4 and 5), the

military's arbitrary distribution of resources and patronage became grounds for intense inter- and intra-familial disputes in the village. As Norboo and his supporters demanded a national award for his outstanding contributions, his detractors argued that Norboo's recognition would obscure the contributions of many who had consistently given their lives, labor, and resources to protect India's honor and integrity. Militarization intensified the experience of social fragmentation as claims of patriotism and nationalism became grounds for familial disputes and contestations. In their bid to reinvent themselves as "ideal citizens," Brogpas relied on claims of loyalty and national service, ideologies that considerably undermined preexisting frameworks of sociality, solidarity, and interchange.

Conclusion

This chapter argued that Brogpas have accommodated military's wartime needs through socially instituted categories of obligatory work and labor. Like other border communities, Brogpas have repeatedly offered their lives and labor to sustain the military's combat capabilities. The Kargil war further cemented this dependence as the military relied heavily on civilian labor to function effectively in a high-altitude warzone, compelling many young men to participate in the war in order to fulfill their obligatory communal duties. Brogpa men fulfilled several roles both during and after the war: as informers, porters, or recruits they volunteered their lives and labor to assist the Indian army, experiences that motivated many to join the military permanently. Although their reliance on the military has been an integral aspect of Brogpa lives since 1948, the proximity of the Kargil war created multiple opportunities for military employment and wage labor. Their dangerous and difficult wartime work, however, blurred the lines between civilian labor and national service, rendering distinctions between everyday sustenance and nationalism obsolete. Not only did young Brogpa men valorize the military and aspire to be a part of it, but the war and the subsequent militarization of Brogpa villages also disrupted existing labor arrangements in which men and women shared relations of dependence and complementarity. While women did not share the experiences of masculine valor and bravado, feminized labor became an important resource to fulfill the military's persistent demands for food and rations both during and after the war. Because of severe disruptions in their customary division of labor, women's and men's tasks were no longer collaborative or complementary. Indeed, many women attributed the growing "waywardness" of men to a dramatic shift in existing labor arrangements that "freed" men from domestic and agricultural activities.

War and post-war labor did not just constitute emerging notions of masculinity and femininity but also shaped the texture of social and communal relationships. Brogpas profoundly reworked the meanings of patriotism, nationalism, and citizenship as sentiments of national sacrifice and wartime heroism became commonplace. The thorough militarization of Brogpa lives and their increasing reliance on military's patronage and largesse made questions of loyalty and

sacrifice highly charged arenas of dispute and contestation. Militarized labor became grounds to articulate new claims of belonging and citizenship. But as nationalist visions of cohesion and citizenship became pervasive among Brogpas, local relationships of solidarity and community were profoundly undermined.

Chapter 4 will document how Brogpas redefined their social and religious histories and identities even further within the context of Operation Sadhbhavna, a post-war military operation that was designed to “win the hearts and minds” of border communities. Purportedly based on promoting goodwill and development, Operation Sadhbhavna was essentially a counterinsurgency operation that treated border communities as inchoate citizens who could not be trusted. This threat, however, was perceived to emanate more from Muslim communities who shared religious affiliations with communities in Pakistan (Aggarwal and Bhan 2009). Brogpas attempted to concretize their religious identities as Buddhists, primarily because of the insecurities generated by the military’s core ideologies of suspicion and surveillance against Muslims. Unfounded suspicions of Muslim “disloyalty” fueled further discord in the village as Brogpas became fully incorporated into the militarized projects of surveillance and nation-building.

4 Heart warfare?

On a cold morning in February 2004, preparations were on for a medical camp by the 48 Gurkha Regiment of the Indian army. Villagers had barely recovered from the exhaustion of celebrating *Lhogsar* and *Yatta*, winter months usually slotted for such festivities. The ceasefire had eased the army's anxieties about cross-border shelling and the decision to mingle with the villagers gave them, the Commanding Officer told me, "something interesting to do." To make arrangements for the camp, a steady stream of army trucks packed with soldiers had arrived from Yaldor the previous day. The ill-equipped school in the village was quickly transformed into a mobile health dispensary: rows of neatly aligned chairs now faced the school building and classrooms were emptied to serve as consultation spaces for a team of army doctors. The corner room was exclusively set up for the Commanding Officer of 48 Gurkha Rifles (GR), while a microphone and a speaker were installed on a small podium in front of the playground. In order to attract more villagers to attend, the army set up a supplies canteen to sell subsidized groceries. Arrangements for tea and snacks were made in the makeshift kitchen adjoining the canteen. A large projector was installed to screen *LoC Kargil*, a Bollywood film celebrating the Indian military's valor and bravado during the Kargil war. After testing their sound system one final time, the soldiers returned to their base camp at 7.30 p.m., exhausted from the day's work.

The camp started very early the next day.¹ Neatly arranged rows of white and olive jeeps stood on the dusty strip that had been cleaned and demarcated with limestone powder and smooth rounded pebbles. Makeshift steps were created to facilitate mobility over the rough terrain leading up to the school. Army flags adorned the entrance to the village and transformed the unfamiliar space into a welcoming avenue for the military.

Notwithstanding the CO's rather benign comment about "wanting to do something interesting," the preparations for this event seemed all too rehearsed. They followed an established global template of counterinsurgency operations that supplement the military's combat strategies with "armed social work" (Kilcullen 2006). Operation Sadhbhavna, of which the health camp was a part, was thus a premeditated military strategy to "win the hearts and minds of border communities" considered alienated and disillusioned due to the protracted conflict in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. As I explore later in the chapter,

Sadhbhavna relied on very specific constructions of Ladakhis as partial citizens, deformed products of India's partition whose fragmented histories and memories continued to threaten India's conceptual and cartographic unity. Based on the prolonged conflict between India and Pakistan, especially after the Kargil war of 1999, border communities were suspected of abetting Pakistani incursions into Indian territory and ultimately joining hands with the ongoing insurgency in Kashmir. The Kargil war had raised the possibilities of future incursions from across the border, and communities living along the line of control were suspected of scheming with Pakistan to divide India along religious lines. Haunted by the specter of an inchoate insurgency, the military coined the term "incipient terrorism"² in the post-war period primarily to recast border populations in Ladakh as emergent threats to the Indian polity (Aggarwal and Bhan 2009). While "incipient" indicated the possibility of unruly citizenship on India's borders, it also legitimized the military's moral project of counterinsurgency, albeit one that did not involve the explicit use of force. Instead, the military launched Operation Sadhbhavna, a large-scale initiative that was in line with "population-centric models" of counterinsurgency and focused on the language of "diplomacy and development" to quell potential insurgencies (Khalili 2011; Paczynska 2009: 3).³

Instead of promoting it as a counterinsurgency operation, however, an army booklet compiled by the HQ 14 Corps described Operation Sadhbhavna as:

Civic action programs undertaken for the local populace under Op Sadhbhavna are small-scale community projects aimed at development of the people of this area that allow them to lead a long and a healthy life, acquire knowledge and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living. This is achieved by providing for their basic aspirations and ameliorating their civic grievances to the extent possible. It is also aimed at winning the hearts and minds of the people of this remote and inaccessible area where civil administration is unable to operate effectively owing to the prevailing security situation and remoteness.

(Operation Sadhbhavna: HQ 14 Corps Compilation, 2003: 5)

Operation Sadhbhavna was promoted as a "civic action" program whose primary purpose was to meet the aspirations of remote border communities for a better quality of life. Its stated intent was to reduce the deep-seated hostility and alienation among border communities who harbored "grievances" against a government that had failed to "operate effectively" due to the "prevailing security situation" in the region. Operation Sadhbhavna was also described as "[a] border management program [that considered] human security [to be] an essential component of national security. [Since] human security came from human development," Operation Sadhbhavna was designed to foster development in remote border locations.

In an effort to preempt an impending crisis of loyalty on the borders, Sadhbhavna claimed to use development and human welfare to win "hearts and minds," a mission that promised to ensure India's long-term security against future threats

of treason or terrorism. No longer limited to situations of unrest or warfare, thus, the military's presence in civilian areas became less unusual and much more routinized as Operation Sadhbhavna dramatically expanded the military's role in health, education, and social welfare.

I begin this chapter by chronicling Sadhbhavna's primary activities in Ladakh, with a special focus on 1200 Mountain Brigade (Mt. Bdg.), the military unit stationed about a mile from Garkone. In the next section, I discuss Sadhbhavna's conflicting genealogies that shaped the core of the military's goodwill interventions as well as their numerous inconsistencies and contradictions. While it championed human security, Sadhbhavna was at its core an old counterinsurgency strategy designed to win over "men's minds" rather than their "territories" (Wolf 1965: 1). It blurred the crucial differences between human security and counterinsurgency, an increasingly common trend in many military operations that rely on humanitarianism to redefine their roles in the new global order, a trend Chomsky (1999) aptly refers to as the "new military humanism." By deftly combining their otherwise irreconcilable objectives, the top brass of the Indian military was able to chart the course for a brand of militarism that relied heavily on the discourses of human security and development to normalize (and strengthen) the military's continued emphasis on defense and counterinsurgency. Yet several junior officers involved with Operation Sadhbhavna struggled to reconcile the incongruent pursuits of human and state security, a struggle that was evident in the many ambiguities they expressed regarding their new role as armed social workers. I focus on such contradictions to understand what Schirmer calls the "mentality" of military officers, specific patterns of thinking that profoundly shaped Sadhbhavna's popular reception and, ultimately, its failure to transform the military's institutional culture of violence and warfare (1998: 4). I finally explore how counterinsurgency, an "integral part of India's overall security policy," has gradually infiltrated domains of belongingness, citizenship, and democracy and brought them in concert with militarized goals of national security and surveillance (Ganguly and Fidler 2009: i). In particular, I investigate how Brogpas became incorporated into structures and ideologies of counterinsurgency and surveillance. How did Sadhbhavna's covert logic of monitoring "incipient terrorists" shape Brogpa perceptions of selfhood and communal identities? And, finally, what kind of social orders were fostered through the entrenchment of fear, suspicion, and insecurity?

Operation Sadhbhavna: an overview

Implemented in 2000 in 190 villages and towns along the border by the 14 Corps of the Indian army, Operation Sadhbhavna catered to a population of approximately 109,541 with a financial outlay of 1,400,0000 Indian rupees (Sridhar 2001). The sections below highlight the activities carried out by the 14 Corps in Ladakh as documented in their promotional booklets and my personal interviews with several army officials. In particular, I focus on the activities of the 1200 Mt. Bdg.⁴ in Garkone, Dartsigs, Batalik, Lalung, and other neighboring villages. The "thrust

areas” of Operation Sadhbhavna were primary education, secondary and tertiary health care, community development, and women’s empowerment, with Dartsigs being the model village for the Operation in the Batalik sector. Dartsigs was home to the model Sadhbhavna school, a modest medical dispensary, and a small contingent of soldiers who lived permanently at the base of the village. The army was involved in activities as diverse as building houses, roads, and schools in border regions, equipping schools with computers to modernize the existing curriculum, and training women to become independent and self-reliant (Naik 2001).

While funding for Operation Sadhbhavna came primarily from the Ministry of Defense (MoD) and from the Border Area Development Project (BADP), the military also received money and equipment from other sources such as the Ministry of Information Technology (IT) and private IT corporations such as IBM and Infosys. The BADP allocation in 2003–2004 was 28,800,000 Indian rupees and the MoD allocation for the same year was 374,000,000 Indian rupees. The Information Technology (IT) ministry of the central government in 2001 provided assistance in the form of 200,000 (2 crore) Indian rupees (HQ 14 Corps). In the sections below, I discuss the military’s numerous activities that were designed to foster development in India’s remotest corners, a pursuit that promised to assimilate border residents into the national mainstream and secure their loyalties to India. Rather than discuss how villagers or individual military personnel perceived such initiatives, the next section will primarily focus on data and representations that were publicly disseminated by the military through interviews and through official public relations brochures.⁵

Sadhbhavna schools

Education was a crucial tool to ensure that young children were socialized from their earlier years to “imbibe the values and ethics of good citizenship.” Existing models of education had allegedly played a minimal role in providing “quality” education to Ladakhi children, therefore, the military decided to establish centers for primary education throughout Ladakh. By the end of 2002, the army had set up 16 army Sadhbhavna schools in Ladakh that followed a Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) curriculum unlike state schools in the region that relied on the J&K board curriculum. In addition, the army’s Sadhbhavna schools boasted of providing at least one computer with Internet connectivity for every 15 students (*Sakal*, 15 October 2001). In 2001, the Information Technology minister Pramod Mahajan contributed to the army’s vision of creating “an infotech bonanza” by providing 350 Pentium III personal computers, 60 television sets, and some V-sat telephones (Pannu, *Hindustan Times*, 13 October 2001). The army was also in touch with several Information Technology (IT) companies such as Infosys and IBM for software and hardware installations (*ibid.*). The immense importance placed on computer literacy and Internet connectivity was, as their brochure explained, to “educate and empower people” (HQ 14 Corps) and to ensure that remote villagers became aware of and active participants in matters of

national and global significance. Since lack of education was considered to be primarily responsible for the “backwardness” in and around Garkone, the 1200 Mt. Bdg. established three army goodwill schools in Dartsigs, Batalik, and Lalung. According to the 1200 Mt. Bdg. booklet, measures were taken to “improve the quality of education” and incorporate extracurricular activities such as outdoor and indoor sports, educational excursions, painting, and music classes. The three schools under 1200 Mt. Bdg. had 83,612 Indian rupees allocated for routine expenditure, each accompanied with an honorarium fund of 127,286 Indian rupees used to pay staff salaries. The school in Dartsigs was considered a huge success because it had dramatically “enhanced literacy levels” in the village. From a literacy level of 45–50 percent in 2001, the literacy level in 2003 has increased to 65–70 percent. In addition to raising literacy levels, according to army literature, the school had fostered “quality education, national integration, and communal harmony” (1200 Mt. Bdg. booklet).

Women Empowerment Centers (WECs)

In line with recent discourses of women’s empowerment and development, HQ 14 corps had opened 11 empowerment centers in Ladakh by 2002. These programs mostly catered to young women who were between 18 and 35 years old. Along with training them to become better agents of socialization, these centers were designed to “enhance the prestige and image of women in their respective societies” (1200 Mt. Bdg. booklet). Women were taught to knit, weave, and sew but computer literacy and adult education programs were also integral components of the WECs. The WECs also provided education on “family planning and social welfare activities through regular classes conducted by qualified specialists” (1200 Mt. Bdg. booklet). The adult education center (a component of the WECs) in Garkone employed two female teachers from Garkone. Touted as a successful endeavor by the army, the training and tutoring imparted through the WECs were claimed to have resulted in an “enhanced level of social equanimity in the region” (1200 Mt. Bdg. booklet). The brochure also claimed that the women who were “traditionally relegated to domestic and agriculture chores, had enhanced their social and economic outlook” (ibid.). Without providing much evidence to back its claims, the brochure also boldly stated that there was “a palpable excitement in the region with the mushrooming of educated and self-confident women in the otherwise insipid environment” (ibid.).

Medical care under Operation Sadhbhavna

Medical care under Operation Sadhbhavna was aimed at providing primary, secondary, and tertiary health care to local populations through a network of medical aid centers (MACs), Field Ambulances (Fd. Ambs), and hospitals in Leh, Delhi, and Chandigarh. By the year 2002, six Medical Care Complexes had been set up in Ladakh (Parmar 2002). Under the primary health care scheme, MACs and Field Ambulances that offered “comprehensive medical and dental cover”

were established in select villages (1200 Mt. Bdg. booklet). The Fd. Amb. was responsible for conducting health camps twice a week in remote villages (*ibid.*). In addition, there were two smaller medical aid centers run by the Fd. Amb. in Dartsigs and Achinathang that provided day-to-day medical care and attention to local people. Yet again without citing much evidence, the 1200 Mt. Bdg. military brochure claimed that the army's medical efforts in Garkone and adjoining villages had led to an overall improvement in the health standard of the population and stemmed the spread of communicable diseases.

Under secondary and tertiary medical care, patients were referred to the General Military Hospital in Leh, Chandigarh, or Delhi. The brochure claimed that 280 patients (from the entire region of Ladakh) were treated free in the General Military Hospital in Leh by 2002, and at least 77 patients had been flown to Delhi, Chandigarh, and Pune for treatment of complex disorders (Parmar 2002).

Community Development Initiative (CDI)

Under their CDI, the army carried out several programs in different parts of Ladakh such as rural electrification in select areas, vocational training for unemployed youth, setting up of resource centers in Leh, Kargil, and Drass for mentally and physically challenged persons, an orphanage at Kargil, and a boys' hostel in Drass.

1200 Mt. Bdg. encouraged villagers (in Garkone, Dartsigs, Batalik, Silmoo, Achinathang, and Lalung) to grow a variety of vegetables that the army purchased from them (see Chapter 3). This scheme was believed to "generate employment in addition to bringing in financial benefits to the locals" (1200 Mt. Bdg. booklet). As part of this effort, the army also aimed at setting up greenhouses in the villages so that fresh vegetables could be produced in the winter months. A total of 47 greenhouses were built in 20 villages by the 1200 Mt. Bdg.

In addition, CDIs also included budgets for the repair of irrigation channels (*kuls*), schools, and religious places. CDIs provided assistance for the reconstruction of damaged houses (because of rain or other reasons), selected children for free education in army schools across the country, and arranged educational tours and excursions to different parts of India. These excursions were modernity tours to "expose" villagers living in the peripheral and remote parts of India to the "economic progress and diversity" of India (1200 Mt. Bdg. booklet).

Sadhbhavna: a "flood" of transformations

The four "thrust" areas that were covered under Operation Sadhbhavna—education, health, women's empowerment, and community development—established a substantive military presence in the region and "penetrated civil-society on all levels" (Schirmer 1998: 64). Sadhbhavna activities were initially welcomed by local villagers. Brogpa families chose to send their children to Sadhbhavna schools instead of sending them to government schools that did not offer English or computer literacy classes. Women were keen to learn to spell

and write their names; they would gather enthusiastically for their weekly lessons to learn the English and Hindi alphabets. Older women were disappointed when they were denied admission to learning centers that mostly catered to younger Brogpa women. Also, villagers preferred to visit the army's health care facilities since they were located closer to Brogpa villages. For instance, when Dawa hit his wife with an iron rod in the middle of the night for having an alleged affair with a Nepali, we drove her to the medical facility in Achinathang, 13 kilometers from the village.⁶ Brogpas visited the military base in Achinathang for other medical emergencies or for routine medical care. Indeed, Sadhbhavna's strategic focus on education, health, and women's empowerment in Garkone and adjoining villages bolstered the samaritan image of the military, more so in the initial years of its implementation. Precisely because of its claims to offer the best (and the most accessible) avenues for human and social development to Ladakhis, the military quickly established itself as a powerful presence in people's everyday lives.

However, Brogpas described Sadhbhavna as a "flood" that deluged them with benefits and would disappear as quickly. In a year or two, Brogpas grew wary of sending their children to English-medium Sadhbhavna schools that only offered primary-level education to students. Although excited to have English language skills imparted to their children, students suffered when they had to switch to Urdu in middle or high schools. Likewise, although women willingly joined adult-literacy classes in the beginning, their busy work season discouraged many from attending them regularly. In fact, the two local teachers who were appointed from the village would pretend that the attendance was regular each time a soldier came to check on them. Gradually, women's interest declined as they were castigated for neglecting their literacy classes, a task Brogpa women had no time for amidst their busy work schedules.

Even though celebrated in media reports and official military brochures for its glorious success in reaching out to remote communities, Sadhbhavna was perfunctory at best. Despite its rhetoric of grassroots empowerment, Sadhbhavna was a strategy deployed by the military to successfully infiltrate domains of civilian life that were previously inaccessible to them, a goal that the military achieved with substantive success. Notwithstanding frequent critiques against its unsustainability and ad-hocism, Brogpas differentiated little between Sadhbhavna-related activities and the broader post-war interventions of the military that had created multiple avenues for employment and income-generation, as explained in Chapter 3. For instance, the new roads that the military constructed to access their high-altitude border posts helped many Brogpa households reach their scattered landholdings; widespread recruitments into Ladakh Scouts provided them with salaried jobs; portering was considered a lucrative occupation even though it contributed very little to improve people's social status or upward mobility; *dumbas* or vegetable gardens were applauded as a good source of additional income; likewise, a few Brogpas who were hired to keep a close vigil over quotidian events and visitors in the village earned regular salaries as spies or informers. Thus, Sadhbhavna was not always perceived as existing independently

of the recent and widespread transformations in civilian-military relations; indeed, Brogpas often situated Sadhbhavna within the sweeping set of changes that the villagers had experienced in the post-war period.

Such changes certainly brought Brogpas varying degrees of economic benefits even as occupations like portering and soldiering furthered their incorporation into the military's security apparatus. Brogpas found it hard to separate the specific outcomes of Sadhbhavna from the benefits or limitations of relying on a militarized economy that was fueled by frequent cross-border wars and conflicts. While they resented living under the constant shadow of wars, they were equally worried about their survival and livelihood if the military ever downsized due to improved relations between India and Pakistan. In a popular magazine, a Ladakhi writer expressed precisely this concern. He noted: "Although the army's presence [had] been a huge boost to Ladakh's economy, it may be a bubble economy, threatened by the risk of peace!" (*Ladakh Melong* 2005). Likewise, in Garkone, villagers often recounted the story of an older Brogpa man who, a month after the war began, hiked to the nearest hilltop with the hope that someone would hear him and yelled: "Thank you, Pakistan, for starting the war and bringing us opportunities that we would have otherwise never had."

I read this quotation as an apt reflection of how Brogpas viewed their place in the wider national polity: as populations who became visible only during times of wars or other such crises when India's territorial integrity was at stake. To them, Sadhbhavna was no different; a "flood" that could subside once cross-border tensions ebbed and politics became less frenetic and uncertain. Rather than viewing it as a "distinct" operation that improved their access to health and education, Brogpas viewed Sadhbhavna as part of the other post-war transformations that had swept their village. However, the military promoted Sadhbhavna differently. Its official representations ignored how it was only one aspect of an emergent relationship between Brogpas and the military, a relation that involved a massive restructuring of the Brogpa economy and their collective and individual stakes in the projects of defense and national security. Several military officials spoke candidly about how Sadhbhavna's "people-oriented focus" was meant to neutralize local anger against the routine and widespread co-optation of local labor and resources or the occasional death or injury of civilians during cross-border shelling. Despite their candor, Sadhbhavna's institutional rhetoric promoted the military as an actor interested in protecting people and their rights and "dignity."⁷ Ravina Aggarwal and I have discussed in detail the global contexts that enabled the Indian military to establish itself as a benevolent actor in a region that had suffered from decades of violence and warfare (Aggarwal and Bhan 2009). Sadhbhavna, we argue, was inspired by global political trends in which traditional meanings of security were thoroughly reexamined in the context of new and large-scale threats created (allegedly) by poverty and underdevelopment (*ibid.*). Development became the new weapon to battle insurgents or potential insurgents whose poverty and deprivation would eventually drive them to wage asymmetrical wars of the future. The securitization of development was clearly not unique to Ladakh but reflected the ways in which human rather than state

security became indispensable to forestall potential wars and minimize sources of social and economic deprivation.

While the focus of this work was on the recent deployment of the army in Ladakh, I want to suggest here that a sole focus on post-Cold War transformations masks the use of development and other social improvement programs as a means to combat insurgencies long before discourses of human security became pervasive in the 1990s. The securitization of development was well underway prior to the emergence of human security as a radical counterpoint to conventional templates of state or national security. By focusing on the malleability of the development discourse and its co-optation by multiple political actors across different time frames, I show the ways in which the Indian military was able to sustain its image as an agent of human welfare while simultaneously being invested in projects of surveillance and counterinsurgency in Ladakh.

In the following two sections, I briefly review the historical trajectories of two central concepts that informed Operation Sadhbhavna: “human security” and “counterinsurgency,” both of which appropriate the security-development nexus, albeit toward dramatically different ends. I do so in order to explore how the global incorporation of development into paradigms as diverse as human security and counterinsurgency allowed the Indian military to smooth over the inherent ambiguities between human and state-centric discourses of security. Indeed, development blurred the tenuous boundary between militarism and humanitarianism to forge a sociopolitical order in which projects of social improvement, compassion, and betterment provided an ideal framework to strengthen the Indian military’s counterinsurgency operations in Ladakh.

Human security and Sadhbhavna

Although local in scope, Sadhbhavna was shaped predominantly by the global re-envisioning of the security doctrine in the post-Cold War period (Aggarwal and Bhan 2009). The end of the Cold War saw a dramatic reduction in conventional warfare. However, the increased preponderance of civil wars and resource-related conflicts affirmed that the world faced complex challenges in the twenty-first century, which needed to be dealt with differently from the political threats of the Cold War era (Aggarwal and Bhan 2009; Duffield 2001, 2008; Pugh 1998; Roberts 1993). An overwhelming focus on state security could no longer guarantee human rights and freedoms. On the contrary, the two World Wars and a sustained arms race had eroded the state’s image as a protector of human life and liberty, forcing strategists and scholars alike to challenge state-centric discourses on security.⁸ The concept of human security called for a radical re-envisioning of the security doctrine that had predominantly focused on maintaining territorial boundaries and preparing states for defense and combat (MacFarlane and Khong 2006).

In a scenario where poverty and deprivation were primary sources of insecurity and political instability, development presumably contained the powers to ally hostile populations and “reconcile the demand for order with the contingencies of

progress” (Duffield 2008: viii). No longer limited to raising people’s standard of living, bettering their prospects of health and education, or integrating hitherto marginal places into a global market economy, development became an ideal instrument for conflict prevention and peace building. Indeed, as Tschirgi rightly contends, the post-Cold War period witnessed a strategic integration between development and security “after [their] deliberate bifurcation during the cold war” (2005: 3). For development to be effectively merged with radical reinterpretations of security, however, the paradigm of development had to be dramatically revised. The emphasis on economic growth, which was the dominant paradigm until the end of WWII, had failed to improve people’s lives in the Third World or ameliorate widespread economic deprivation or poverty. Instead of promoting top-down models of economic growth, post-Cold War formulations emphasized participation and decentralization as alternative routes for effective development.

In other words, the discourse of human security was born out of two concurrent trends: (1) the re-envisioning of the security doctrine that deemphasized state security; and (2) the reinvention of development along humanistic lines that encouraged decentralized, participatory, and inclusive forms of development. The post-Cold War period witnessed an explicit shift in the conceptualization of global politics as a “downward movement from the state to the individual,” which put humans at the center of global geopolitics (MacFarlane and Khong 2006: 161). It was hardly surprising that by the end of the Cold War, we witnessed an overt politicization of humanism and its deployment in highly controversial missions that threatened state sovereignty under the pretext of peace-building and humanitarianism. While the “human” emerged as the new object of care and compassion, it produced alongside a wide network of state and non-state actors deeply invested in the morality of protection. Human security thus produced new constellations of power and governance; more than “a specific condition or a measurable state of existence,” human security was predominantly what Duffield calls a social relation that “empower[ed] international institutions and actors to individuate, group and act upon Southern populations” (2005: 2, 3).

Precisely because of its moral purchase in international as well as in domestic politics, human security has been widely deployed by a diverse set of actors to legitimize their expanded role in public life. For instance, as Ravina Aggarwal and I show in the case of Sadhbhavna, the Indian military that was strictly responsible for conventional defense and combat until the end of the Kargil war used the framework of human security to carve out a stronger role in everyday governance (Aggarwal and Bhan 2009). Relations of care and compassion were thoroughly militarized as tropes of human welfare and development became instruments to strengthen the nation’s security apparatus. Regardless of its emancipatory goals, thus, human security was a “profoundly political project,” one that legitimized the institution most associated with conventional pursuits of defense and border warfare (Tschirgi 2005: 43, 44).

So far, I have argued that Sadhbhavna was profoundly shaped by discourses of human security that rested on a redefined relationship between security and development in the post-Cold War period. In the next section, I historicize

Sadhbhavna's logic as also based on an older counterinsurgency doctrine that deployed development to strengthen conventional structures of security and surveillance and deepen the military's presence in civilian life.⁹

Counterinsurgency and Sadhbhavna

The notion that military operations and combat capabilities were not enough to fight counterinsurgency operations was already widely accepted by security experts in the 1940s. Malaya provided a much-celebrated model of successful counterinsurgency propaganda that went beyond "words" to focus on "deeds" in an attempt to improve the socio-economic security of rural populations (Ramakrishna 2001). Some years later, the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) initiative was unsuccessfully carried out by the US military to pacify communist groups in Vietnam. In 1962, the US produced a counterinsurgency doctrine called the Overseas Internal Defense Policy (OIDP), a classified program that failed to gain momentum, primarily due to the US military's "tragedy in Vietnam" that prompted many in the US military "to forget the COIN lessons learned in that conflict" and desist from fighting such wars in the future (Fidler 2009: 208). As civilian insurgencies became more common, however, counterinsurgency and its reliance on non-conventional battle tactics assumed a new centrality, particularly after the US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (Gompert et al. 2009; Kilcullen 2010).

Revived in the US as a predominant strategy of warfare in 2007, most notably by General Petraeus and his team of scholars and military professionals, counterinsurgency now reflects an uncharacteristic alliance between discourses of human rights and militarism (Pedden 2012). Petraeus is known as "a staunch adherent" of the kind of counterinsurgency war that privileges "protecting the population" over scoring "body counts."¹⁰ As such, while force and violence remain important, human welfare and development are considered critical for "effective counterinsurgency" operations in contexts where the "real battle is for civilian support" (Sewall 2007: xxv).¹¹ For instance, in his address to a group of US commanders in 2009, Petraeus outlined this particular model of counterinsurgency:

Cooperative comprehensive approaches with regional partners involve significantly more than the application of just military or kinetic action. In fact, they must do far more if they are to address not just the symptoms or current challenges, but also their underlying causes. The lack of sustainable development in certain parts of this region, for example, is not just a social or humanitarian issue, it is a serious security concern as well.¹²

It is clear from Petraeus's statement that discourses of underdevelopment and insecurity have merged imperceptibly to sanction the military's battle against the "underlying causes" of conflicts and insurgencies in places as diverse as Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. While foregrounding civilian security and

development during conventional armed conflicts would have generated a massive “uproar, it is [the dominant] mantra” in ongoing counterinsurgency wars (Pedden 2012: 820).¹³ And, yet, as Nosheen Ali shows through her insightful work in Northern Pakistan, humanitarian development projects of the US military reinforce the “project of empire” by extending US imperialism and hegemony through claims to improve women’s rights and education (Ali 2010: 541, 542). Furthermore, by situating Pakistan’s existing turmoil outside the complex legacies of US interventions in Pakistan, humanitarian gestures of the US military further “essentialize Pakistan as a zone of ignorance, backwardness, and extremism” (ibid.: 556).

Unlike the US whose COIN interventions have been global in scope, conducted in places as diverse as Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, India’s counterinsurgency efforts have been domestic, primarily directed against dissident populations in Assam, Nagaland, Punjab, and Kashmir (other than in Sri Lanka, where the Indian military was deputed to counter the LTTE) (Chadha 2005; Ganguly and Fidler 2009). In the initial years after India’s independence, counterinsurgency was “secondary to [the army’s] primary duty of defending India from external threats” (Goswami 2009: 66). When domestic tensions escalated in Punjab, Assam, and Kashmir, with the rise of armed groups seeking independence from Indian rule, the army was deployed in “disturbed” states to curb people’s anti-national rebellions. In the initial years, the Indian army followed a policy of “attrition,” a directive that emphasized the violent extermination of enemy combatants over winning their hearts and minds (ibid.: 67). This policy of “seeking and destroying” insurgents could hardly deter the political unrest in several Indian states where popular demands for autonomy or secession were supported by vast swathes of civilian population. For instance, the military’s strategy of creating fortified villages and strategic hamlets in Mizoram in the 1960s was devised to separate insurgents from non-insurgents; however, such segregations led to immense human rights violations and forced displacements, furthering people’s alienation and apathy towards the Indian army. Isolated operations that involved an element of “goodwill” emerged in the 1990s, for instance, Operation Good Samaritan was deployed in the Northeast in the 1995 as a “peace offensive” to portray the Indian army as a “people-friendly force.”¹⁴ However, such efforts were not a regular feature of India’s counterinsurgency operations until much later when the Indian military routinely deployed a mixed strategy to fight insurgents, one that combined “political accommodation and economic development” with the conventional “use of force.”¹⁵ In 2006, India codified its years of counterinsurgency experience into the *Doctrine of Sub-Conventional Operations (DSCO)*, in which military officials were instructed to “follow the philosophy of an iron fist in a velvet glove” (Sahukar, n.d.: 35).¹⁶ Given India’s extensive experience fighting insurgencies “within its territory for virtually its entire existence,” the new doctrine aimed to “synthesize India’s COIN know-how in a single doctrinal document” (Fidler 2009: 208).¹⁷ While the army was expected to show no leniency toward “hard core terrorists,” it was directed to promote its “humane face” and embrace the “people-centric nature of COIN operations” (Banerjee 2009: 203).

The military's role was no longer just to "kill" insurgents but to diffuse insurgent activities, a transformation that could only be achieved if the military used minimal force, understood local cultures, and emphasized human welfare and civic action (Shekatkar 2009: 24). Rather than subjugating people to routine violence and torture, then, the new doctrine proposed the strategy of "trust and nurture" to curb secessionist aspirations in insurgency-afflicted regions of the Indian sub-continent (Goswami 2009). In places like Kashmir and the Northeast, where a series of overt human rights violations had solidified the image of the army as an "occupation force," discourses of goodwill and development were deployed to erase the army's litany of crimes and violations. For instance, outlining the nature of activities covered under Operation Samaritan, an army booklet notes:

At the behest of the Chief of the Army Staff, a long-term plan was evolved for development works in Nagaland and in Manipur. Code-named "Operation Good Samaritan", it was set in motion by the Army Development Group (ADG), under the aegis of Headquarters 3 Corps, in June 1995. The ADG instituted a wide spectrum of projects such as the construction of community halls, toilet blocks, water services, imparting vocational training to the locals and so on. Initially the people were hesitant but soon they responded enthusiastically. They helped in carting stores to remote areas and provided labour for the speedy completion of the projects.

(Kanwal 2000: 115)

Quite contrary to Sadhbhavna's public portrayal as an unprecedented effort to rebuild lives devastated by wars and violence, Sadhbhavna, as the above quote and the preceding discussion demonstrate, was born out of a series of earlier counterinsurgency operations in India. What made Sadhbhavna different from previous such operations was the tactful incorporation of human security, an emergent and progressive discourse that allowed the military to establish itself as a decidedly humanist force despite its commitment to core doctrines of warfare, counterinsurgency, and national security. The novelty of Sadhbhavna lay in its ability to co-opt global and humanitarian discourses to revive an older counterinsurgency doctrine that championed the use of development to affirm the nation's security and territorial interests. Lt. General Arjun Ray's dictum that "human security was the core element of national security" merged two ideologically divergent perspectives on security to normalize the military's extensive presence in Kargil and the military's expansive role in civilian life.

Arjun Ray's easy conflation between human and state-centered perspectives on security is remarkably similar to General David Petraeus's controversial remarks in a 2009 interview in which he affirmed that there was no difference between human security and counterinsurgency since both these approaches relied on the two key principles of ensuring that populations met their basic needs and that the "reconcilables [were separated] from the irreconcilables" (Beebe and Kaldor 2010: 68). Correcting such dangerous conflations, Mary

Kaldor points out the fundamental incongruities in the two approaches that General Petraeus, and to an extent Lt. General Ray, tactfully blend together. For her, “human security is [remarkably] different from counterinsurgency, both rhetorically and, in practice” (Kaldor 2009). Human development (at least in principle) is the ultimate goal behind initiatives that promote human security, while it is primarily a means to an end in counterinsurgency operations. Despite its liberal reinvention, counterinsurgency remains a strategy of warfare, which is meant to ensure the final destruction of the enemy or assert the military’s firm control over people’s lives and their social and political allegiances (Kaldor 2009; Slim 2004: 39).

Sadhbhavna thus relied on two deeply incongruent ideologies: human security, an ideology that uses development to expand human freedoms and capabilities, and counterinsurgency that deploys development to track and monitor loyalties and allegiances and is therefore highly regulatory and repressive. Through discourses of development and social welfare then, the top brass of the military attempted to seamlessly blend ideologies that many military officials considered to be disparate and irreconcilable. To what extent was Sadhbhavna able to mediate the divergent ideologies of human security and counterinsurgency? Based on extensive participant observation and a series of structured and unstructured interviews, the next two sections discuss the vastly different interpretations of Sadhbhavna among soldiers and officials who led or participated in the Operation. Their views on Sadhbhavna’s rationality and its purpose were diverse and incompatible. Ultimately, their efforts to bridge the prerogatives of counterinsurgency and human security were marred by enduring inconsistencies and contradictions.

A bloodless war? From brainwashing to heart warfare

Launched in Ladakh two years after the Kargil war ended, Operation Sadhbhavna was based on the assumption that the absence of opportunities for economic growth and stark underdevelopment in Ladakh could provide the impetus for future anti-national activities, a glaring example of which was the ongoing turmoil in Kashmir (Aggarwal and Bhan 2009). Ladakhi alienation posed an imminent danger and Sadhbhavna’s intended aim was, as Arjun Ray phrased it, to “check militancy from spilling across the rest of the J&K into Ladakh.”¹⁸ So, while there was no active insurgency in Ladakh, the military feared that Ladakh’s political climate might incite a popular resentment against the state and produce an insurgency of the kind that existed in Kashmir.¹⁹ The relative absence of “an accountable, streamlined and people-sensitive [state] machinery” had allegedly created a context where terrorism could become a response to the alienation perpetrated by unsympathetic government policies (Dutt 2000: 7).

From its inception then, an effective PR campaign ensured that Operation Sadhbhavna was projected as an unprecedented military strategy that illuminated the otherwise invisible human face of the Indian military. In 2001, a noted newspaper reported how “winds of change [were] blowing along the 284 km

LoC from Turtuk to Batalik, Kargil and Drass, where 190 odd villagers [were] the beneficiaries of the army's novel initiative on border management" (*India Today*, June 11, 2001). Lt. General Arjun Ray of the 14 Corps in Ladakh credited himself with "scripting" Sadhbhavna and redefining the role of the armed forces in the new century (Sridhar 2002).²⁰ Arjun Ray used "words to wage a bloodless war," a journalist reported, as Ray created an array of phrases to communicate the military's zeal to humanize its operations in the aftermath of the Kargil war (*ibid.*). Sadhbhavna, Ray said, indicated that the Indian military had come of age; it was ready to shed its colonial persona to create a democratic army, one that "was of the people, by the people and for the people."²¹ His often-cited statement that "the winning of hearts and minds was a terrible cliché. How can you win minds unless you have won the heart first?" established his image as a soldier with a difference, a rebel within his camp (*ibid.*). Indeed, in an attempt to break away from the popular counterinsurgency dictum of "winning hearts and minds," Ray proposed the doctrine of "heart warfare," a deliberate attempt to recast the military as a compassionate force uninterested in the Cold War approaches of "brainwashing" and psychological warfare.²² The "hearts campaign," in his view, needed to "shed all its psychological baggage" (Ray 2012: 103) by engaging people's "emotions" since "matters of the heart" always "prevailed over matters of the head" (*ibid.*: 90).

Arjun Ray replaced the trope of "brainwashing" with the equally problematic trope of "heart warfare," hoping to promote Operation Sadhbhavna as a compassionate program geared toward the fulfillment of core human needs of security and development. Since then the language of "hearts" over "minds" has become a popular mantra of counterinsurgency warfare in Jammu and Kashmir. For instance, Arjun Ray's initiative was developed further in 2011 by Lt. General Syed Ata Hasnain of the 15 Corps in Srinagar who, much like his predecessor, insisted that the "heart" was indeed his "new weapon" to earn "genuine goodwill" in Kashmir:²³

There is an essential difference between the conventional WHAM approach and that of the "Heart Theme". The latter has, as its basis, the retention of power through genuine goodwill, humane attitude, sympathetic conduct and, most of all, an understanding of social, cultural and moral sensitivities. The arrogance of power needs to be subjugated to the goodness of attitude. Such an approach appeals to the psyche and not the material greed of people. The Heart Theme is, therefore, several steps beyond WHAM and way ahead of Sadhbhavna.

(Lt. Gen. Syed Ata Hasnain, September 2011)

For General Hasnain, the "heart theme" was the more humane expression of Sadhbhavna. In his view, a focus on "cultural and moral sensitivities" trumped Sadhbhavna's agendas to fulfill people's "material greed." Although yet another attempt to erase its history of brutality in Kashmir through tropes of sympathy and sentimentalism, the military's emphasis on "hearts" was hardly new. Indeed, it

firmly aligned with Arjun Ray's earlier prescriptions for Ladakh in which Cold War narratives of "brainwashing" were deemed insufficient to tackle popular or incipient insurgencies. Arjun Ray's "heart warfare" was in circulation for quite some time before General Hasnain declared it as an unprecedented formula to rule over dissident hearts.

Despite Sadhbhavna's discursive construction as a conquest for hearts rather than for territory, however, the glaring contradictions inherent in its practice were all too apparent in Ladakh and Kashmir. In Kashmir, for instance, where militarized violence is pervasive and hence resentment against the military fierce and deep-rooted, the farce of Sadhbhavna was hard to ignore, as Ather Zia notes:

Is human security created through starting education projects for children whose fathers have been killed by that very army or health aid given to the women whose husbands are missing; opening snowbound roads for villages when their sons are incarcerated or is it distributing candies to kids while their brothers, fathers or mothers or sisters are being interrogated using third-degree torture which is totally against international humanitarian law? So much so for Operation Sadhbhavna.²⁴

In Ladakh, however, the pursuit of human development alongside the sustained militarization of the borders went largely unquestioned because Ladakhis identified themselves as staunch nationalists compared to their Kashmiri counterparts (Aggarwal 2004; van Beek 2001). Since Sadhbhavna was a preemptive strategy to curb possibilities of an anti-India insurrection in Ladakh, the military was not battling insurgents on a day-to-day basis. The wrath of the military that Kashmir experienced because of counterinsurgency operations—kidnappings, civilian and extrajudicial killings, rapes and unaccounted disappearances, cordon and search operations in which houses and property are burnt or damaged—were largely absent in Ladakh.

By virtue of its location, however, Ladakh routinely witnessed violent political theatrics between India and Pakistan that included frequent cross-border shellings and large-scale wars. Especially with the military's renewed commitment to national security after 1999, it was a common sight to see new bunkers, guns, or deployments across the villages and towns of Ladakh; Bofors guns were always pointed up in combat-ready positions; and landmines were routinely planted in high pasturelands close to the borders.

The spate of war preparations belied the rhetoric of Sadhbhavna, the one that emphasized the need to "[avoid] wars altogether."²⁵ Indeed, the military's defense initiatives reinforced the imminence of wars and the urgency of upgrading the military's capabilities for high-intensity warfare. Even media reports celebrated the military's ability to balance its humanist goals with its continued emphasis on national security. According to a news report:

This was the first time that the organizational, medical, engineering, transport, and educational expertise of an entire army corps was put at the disposal

of the people, not to combat an emergency or natural disaster, but to promote their social and human development. And all this was done without jeopardizing its primary function of training and deploying for high-intensity conflict.

(Jha, *The Hindustan Times*, July 1, 2001)²⁶

As the news report suggests, the military remained firmly anchored in the logic of conventional defense and war preparedness. Therefore, even as Arjun Ray championed the cause of human security, military deployments for conventional warfare continued unabated in Ladakh. The extent of war preparations that entailed restructuring local lives to fulfill the requirements of national security or creating high-altitude warfare schools (see Chapters 3 and 6) belied Sadhbhavna's rhetoric of human security and development. Despite forwarding a "spirit of containment," the military sustained the specter of a "permanent war" by fearing internal disloyalty and subversion or by invoking the imminence of a cross-border invasion by Pakistan or China (Lutz 1997). Indeed, quite contrary to the military's self-promotion as "good peacekeepers and peace makers" (Bhat 2011), Sadhbhavna further emboldened the traditional pursuits of national security, defense, and territoriality rather than minimizing or challenging them.²⁷

Very few soldiers who I spoke with were ready or willing to accept the reassigned role that Operation Sadhbhavna outlined for them. Despite its characterization as a "game of heart warfare" most military officials did not give up their combat mentalities or their entrenched ideologies of warfare.²⁸ A young military officer I interviewed put it succinctly: "My duty is to kill for national defense, there's no other role I am suited for." Rather than just an isolated remark from a young officer, this statement reflects the anxieties of soldiers forced to take on "welfare activities" when their military training prepares them overwhelmingly for violence and conventional warfare. Such dilemmas, Vivek Chadha argues, have become common as militaries are increasingly called upon to engage in counterinsurgency operations that emphasize less violence and more involvement in civic-action initiatives (2009: 38). The hearts and minds formula of counterinsurgency has a "particularly gendered character," as Laleh Khalili points out (2011: 1473). Soldiers, she claims, perceive transforming "civilian allegiances and remaking their social worlds" as strictly feminine tasks (*ibid.*). For recruits who are trained to "kill," an overwhelming investment in social welfare or development missions "feminizes" an institution that prides itself on its ruthlessness and aggression in battle.

In Ladakh, too, the synthesis of human and national security was not as easy to uphold in practice and their awkward articulations revealed the inherent contradictions in Arjun Ray's celebrated prescriptions for peace and reconciliation. I now turn to my extended interviews with army officers to argue that Sadhbhavna's conceptualization and practice were far from uniform. The meanings of goodwill, development, and human security were varied and contested and a massive PR effort to present it as a coherent policy could hardly efface Sadhbhavna's inherent inconsistencies.

Heart warfare or a battle for territory?

A senior officer—either a lieutenant colonel or a full colonel—from each army brigade was the one responsible for overseeing Sadhbhavna's day-to-day execution. Designated to be the public face of the army, the officer met with people, heard their grievances, and even tried resolving local village disputes. Sadhbhavna's rationale that alienation "was not a legal or political issue," but "a matter of the heart that required healing and compassion" (Cariappa et al. 2008) structured many, though not all, of the interactions between military officials and civilians that I observed over the course of three years. I accompanied the villagers to the brigade on many occasions: when they wanted small favors such as equipment, cement, or rations from the military and when they needed the army to intervene in local disputes or an officer's endorsement to enroll their children in schools in Jammu or Leh.

Colonel Sharma, stationed in the Dha brigade from 2001 to 2003, subscribed to this new wave of "heart warfare" with the utmost conviction. Sadhbhavna represented to him a "democratization" of the Indian army, a clean break from its colonial heritage when the military was bereft of social responsibilities or the obligation to engage with or help civilians, other than during natural disasters. Unguarded, he participated in village festivals, and drank and dined with the villagers. To many Brogpas, Colonel Sharma exemplified the changing face of the Indian army, an accessible officer who was only too keen to resolve their problems. He often held *durbars* in the village that were thronged by villagers hoping to catch his attention. Stories of him arriving in the village in the middle of the night to drink *chang* (local drink) were known widely and villagers often praised Colonel Sharma for his generosity and camaraderie. By casting himself in a larger-than-life image, Colonel Sharma quickly became the face of Sadhbhavna in and around Garkone.

Undoubtedly, then, the news of Colonel Sharma being demoted and transferred from Ladakh before the expiration of his term came as a shock to many of his admirers in Garkone. They wondered why Colonel Sharma had suffered such humiliation and disgrace when he was close to a promotion and indeed deserved it. The military, however, thought differently. Colonel Sharma's behavior had "violated the norms of civil-military interactions," I was told. Several army officers complained that Colonel Sharma's behavior was not in line with Sadhbhavna's intended agenda. He "took it too far" by refuting basic premises about the army's "code of conduct." Chastised for overly "fraternizing" with the civilians, his behavior, it was claimed, posed a potential threat to India's national security and was deeply resented by the brigade commander at the time.

Colonel Sharma's expulsion from Ladakh symbolized the anxieties of a military torn between its commitments to a strict protocol that limits civil-military interactions in conflict zones and the military's recent turn to counterinsurgency warfare in which "engaging" with civilians is considered critical for detecting internal threats of terrorism or subversion. While decision-making follows a strict chain of command during conventional warfare, for COIN operations that are

prolonged and involve many civic components, decision-making is often more decentralized (Shekatkar 2009: 22). Junior officers have more “freedom of action” to devise “military operations” or participate in “civil support actions” (ibid.: 21, 22). However, in a rigidly hierarchical setting such as the military, structural changes are not always welcome and anxieties related to national security, as Shekatkar argues, can prevent junior officers from having unguarded interactions with civilians (ibid.). At least this is what cost Colonel Sharma his rank and promotion: the fact that he had “taken it too far” by “fraternizing” with civilians had raised a host of “security” concerns for the military because of which he was first demoted and later transferred to a less prestigious posting.²⁹

Colonel Srivastava, who replaced Colonel Sharma in 2004, approached Sadhbhavna differently. He told me in a matter-of-fact way that his visits to the village were only to “check on” me. While Sadhbhavna was certainly needed, he surmised, it did not mean interacting with the villagers “mindlessly.” Colonel Sharma, according to him, had earned his reputation in the village at the cost of losing it in his unit:

He would freely distribute the military’s stock of alcohol and medication among the villagers. Initially, people would come to me too for every little thing. “Sir, I need ten bags of cement . . . sir, I need this . . . I need that.” I would categorically tell them to contact the Commanding Officer since he was in charge of interacting with civilians.

Soon after Colonel Sharma’s posting, activities related to Sadhbhavna were transferred to the Commanding Officer in Yaldor, a switch Colonel Srivastava argued was meant to “streamline” Sadhbhavna rather than discontinue it:

It was not that we were unable to provide cement to villagers. But we stopped doing it on the basis of individual requests. We told people that the headman should make the request on behalf of the villagers. So we don’t give individual help. Help is only extended at the community level now.

Unlike his predecessor, Colonel Srivastava was not too keen to foster civil–military camaraderie, a sensibility he considered detrimental to his primary focus on defense. Initially, when people stopped his jeep for a lift, he turned his face away. “Now villagers do not expect to be picked up and never stop the jeep,” he confessed. His closest interaction with the locals, he recalled, was in Dartsigs where he had photographed Brogpa girls during a festival and had the pictures delivered to them a month or two later.

Without any standardized measure to “win people’s hearts” and ensure civilian–military camaraderie, Sadhbhavna’s practice was far from uniform and reflected the contingent nature of the military’s goodwill initiative. In addition to interviewing several officers posted in the brigade headquarter in Dha who oversaw Sadhbhavna initiatives in Garkone, I spoke with several military personnel posted in the neighboring villages of Batalik and Silmoo and in the towns of Leh and

Kargil. Their vastly different perspectives on Sadhbhavna that I discuss next complicate Ray's widely celebrated efforts to present Sadhbhavna as a unified and cohesive doctrine to win alienated hearts.

In 2003, when I interviewed Brigadier Patil, he was stationed in the military headquarter in Leh, a large complex of defense installations and military facilities sprawled over acres and acres of beautifully manicured land. Brigadier Patil did not interact with the local communities on a day-to-day basis. Responsible primarily for the upkeep of Sadhbhavna's public image, his comments on Sadhbhavna seemed more rehearsed. Relying on his generic PowerPoint presentation to document Sadhbhavna's many successes in Ladakh, he claimed that Sadhbhavna was primarily a development operation meant to "cater to the remote regions of Ladakh where the civil-state machinery was non-existent." Goodwill was a "fall-out of the several development opportunities created by the Indian army in Ladakh." Stressing the importance of development, he noted:

Why do you think China is attracting more foreign direct investment than India even though they are communists? Why has the world been classified into developed, developing, and underdeveloped? Why was no other parameter chosen? Development is the thing. It brings prosperity, stability and status. Therefore, once we do development, goodwill comes automatically.

Since in his view, "development" was what drove the geopolitical race for power, Brigadier Patil outlined the army's importance in furthering the pursuit of development in India's remote corners where the army, more than the civil government, was equipped to effect change. His consistent efforts to frame Sadhbhavna as a development operation were meant to recast the military through its non-military attributes, an ideological move completely in line with Arjun Ray's rhetoric on the army's changing image in the twenty-first century.

Routinely, officers posted in the towns of Leh and Kargil who interacted often with researchers and journalists promoted Sadhbhavna as a "humanitarian" mission, one that was meant to correct existing regional disparities by improving people's access to quality education, health care, and development. Perceptions of remoteness, however, were hardly neutral. Remoteness, as the quote below demonstrates, conjured images of a parochial people, who were as naïve as they were ignorant. For instance, Lt. Rebecca, who was posted in Kargil in 2003 commented:

You know . . . in a place like this or, for that matter, any other place that is remote and isolated, you are concerned about your daily needs more than issues of national integration. People in small places live in close-knit communities, so there is a lot of reluctance to engage with outsiders. The idea of Sadhbhavna was to develop and upgrade people, mainly to help them get exposed to the rest of the country. So I think after involvement of Sadhbhavna there is a greater commitment from people that they are part of India . . . that they are not completely cut off from the country . . . that is what I have felt.

Lieutenant Rebecca deployed popular perceptions of Kargil as a “hinterland,” relatively unimportant even to the Indian army before 1999, to assert Sadhbhavna’s significance and achievements in the post-war period. The tropes of isolation and remoteness served as benign metaphors to mask anxieties about national identities, loyalties, and citizenship in a place considered vulnerable to political machinations from across the border. In her view, Sadhbhavna was for inhabitants of a remote region like Kargil who were invested in fulfilling their daily needs and were therefore oblivious to questions of “national integration” and assimilation. She considered Kargilis to be “a close-knit” community who were deeply reluctant to engage with outsiders. Sadhbhavna thus was an opportunity to “develop” and “upgrade” their lives by exposing them to the rest of India.

While Brigadier Patil and Lieutenant Rebecca spoke of Sadhbhavna as a humanitarian attempt to “develop” and improve lives in Ladakh, most military officers working directly with communities framed Sadhbhavna in more instrumental ways. Instead of upholding its public image, they were vocal about Sadhbhavna’s strategic benefits for the military. Sadhbhavna, in their view, was a transactional relationship; it assuaged people’s concerns about giving up their land and labor to accommodate the military’s wartime and post-war requirements.

Therefore, for many officers in Batalik and Silmoo, operations like Sadhbhavna were not an exception, but an integral “part of the military’s culture.” Sadhbhavna was perceived as a strategy to neutralize the military’s presence among “alienated populations,” a continuation of earlier counterinsurgency doctrines in which development and civic action were deployed to alleviate local fear and resentment against the army. According to Colonel Pandey, a senior officer responsible for supervising Sadhbhavna in the Batalik sector: Sadhbhavna was popularized as Lieutenant General Arjun Ray’s brainchild only “because he happened to be commanding 14 Corps at the time.” Originally, a part of the larger “Information and Psychological Warfare,” Sadhbhavna was only later characterized as a development operation. Such interventions, according to him, “were not limited to conflict zones although border areas represented the best example of army’s civic amity.”

In our conversation, Colonel Pandey undermined the exclusivity of Sadhbhavna. He even rejected the novelty of Arjun Ray’s celebrated vision for sustainable peace and development. Sadhbhavna, in his view, was a “civic action” policy, a routine measure to ensure that border populations who were less aligned with the imperatives of defense and security were at least receptive to the military’s extensive presence in their villages and fields. Indeed, for Colonel Pandey, security and development were very divergent concepts, “completely divorced from each other”:

I don’t see Sadhbhavna as a development operation. Each district in Ladakh has a development commissioner. Besides, the civil government gets funds for development. This might not be the Army’s perspective in general but it’s mine. Sadhbhavna is civic action not development.

A well-traveled officer who had trained with the US military in Houston and Los Angeles, Colonel Pandey viewed Sadhbhavna as an integral part of the military's pursuit of national security. Despite his hardcore views, he claimed a degree of popularity with the villagers based on his sustained interactions with them: Like Colonel Sharma, he "drank and dined with the villagers." He even drank with "Muslim villagers surreptitiously." He claimed to "know all their personal stories and made it a point to attend their weddings and funerals." Attributing his relationships with the locals to his personality rather than to a doctrinal rethinking within the military, Colonel Pandey called Sadhbhavna "ad hoc," "temporary," and "unsustainable." He further reaffirmed that it was driven by personalities rather than by any foundational critique of the military's conventional emphases on territorial defense and state security.³⁰

Colonel Mahesh, a young military officer stationed in Yaldor, shared Colonel Pandey's view that Sadhbhavna was strictly a "defense" and not a "development" measure:

My boys sometimes have to plant big guns in the fields of villagers. They end up destroying crops and stuff. So Sadhbhavna activities are to assuage the feelings of people. After all, the civilians were here before we arrived, so it is their land. Some old skeptic might look at us as intruders. So whatever we are doing will lead to some kind of development but the aim is not totally development. We are trying our best not to be identified as intruders.

Both these officers saw Sadhbhavna as an instrument to normalize the military's numerous operations in the region and diffuse possible traces of civilian resentment against the military. According to Colonel Mahesh, the primary goal of Sadhbhavna was to "assuage the feelings of people," to prove to them that the military was not an "intruder."

It is clear from the preceding discussion that the meanings and motives of Sadhbhavna varied. Officials entrusted with Sadhbhavna's PR campaign represented it as a generous initiative to "heal hearts," an initiative that highlighted the Indian military's investments in rethinking conventional paradigms of defense and security. Those not responsible for upholding its public face emphasized Sadhbhavna's instrumentality. For some, Sadhbhavna supplemented the military's defense capabilities by ensuring local support and cooperation. For several other officers such as Major Das, Sadhbhavna was perfunctory. "See, we don't need Sadhbhavna for any of our activities. Sadhbhavna is being done in addition to our other activities; it is a bonus, a by-product. If it is there, it's good, if it isn't, it does not make any difference."

In no way do I intend to argue that we treat Operation Sadhbhavna as a smoke-screen of rule or as a ruse for the military's "real" agenda to control subversive populations. On the contrary, the affective element in Sadhbhavna's outreach campaigns cannot be ignored nor can the fact that the military brought in a "flood" of short-term benefits to local populations, at least in Ladakh where communities were able to seek quicker access to medication, education, transportation, and

health care. As my numerous interactions and interviews with the military reveal, even when their efforts were guided by “pure instrumentality,” as in the case of Colonel Pandey, their daily interactions with civilians were complex, and often-times, personal. Indeed, it was precisely the affective dimensions of civil–military interactions that Colonels Sharma and Pandey (and to a large extent Arjun Ray) exemplified that marked the “novelty” of the military’s post-war interventions in Ladakh. While not every officer was “interested” in Sadhbhavna, those who were ensured that the military’s extensive presence was normalized and even desired. I was told that many villagers in Ladakh had named their children “Arjun” or that they worshipped his pictures out of a deep reverence for his magnanimity. To the extent that such depictions of Arjun Ray as “magnanimous” or of Colonels Sharma and Pandey as “local messiahs” represented the “changing face of the Indian military,” they must be taken seriously. Such vivid celebrations of the military’s humanitarianism, even though short-lived and perfunctory, were not just “instrumental.” Because their interactions with civilians became so normalized, Sadhbhavna established a robust foundation for an even deeper regulation of local desires, affiliations, and aspirations.

Notwithstanding its contested goals and genealogy, and the many internal inconsistencies that challenged Arjun Ray’s rhetoric of goodwill, Sadhbhavna successfully entrenched the military’s presence in civilian life. Even officers who portrayed it as a “development” mission agreed that the war of 1999 had dramatically reinforced Kargil’s defense and strategic value. That people’s deep-rooted alienation in Ladakh could result in future incidents of sedition against the Indian state was widely known and acknowledged. In the post-war period, the military solidified such perceptions by scripting new vocabularies of subversion to include emergent forms of political unrest: those that were dormant, yet not completely inert. Characterized by undetermined loyalties and inchoate nationalities, the new threat was embodied in the figure of an incipient terrorist, a partial citizen who, if left unattended, could pose a potential threat to the national-social order. Incipient terrorists represented a pervasive threat to India’s geobody who could undo the myth of eternal territorialities unless they were regulated through therapeutic registers of protection, human security, and development.³¹

Numerous scholars have insightfully discussed the ways in which perceptions of Muslim disloyalty shape elaborate imaginaries of threat and insecurity in Ladakh (Aggarwal 2004; van Beek 1998a). Such imaginaries also founded the discourse of incipient terrorism in Ladakh, as Ravina Aggarwal and I have already discussed (2009). In the next section, I build on this literature by unpacking the logic of “incipience” in counterinsurgency warfare. More specifically, I document the numerous ways in which military officials stationed in the villages and towns of Leh and Kargil rationalized the possibilities of an “incipient insurgency” in Ladakh. The military officials I interviewed either relied on anecdotal “historical” evidence or on caricatured depictions of Ladakh’s religious and ethnic minorities to validate their claims. Brogpa loyalties were considered “neutral,” albeit not completely innocuous, an assessment that was based on widespread perceptions of their distinct ethnic and religious histories.

Militarism, incipient terrorism, and the language of potentiality

A US military pamphlet on counterinsurgency warfare described incipient insurgency as follows: "Incipient insurgency refers to situations ranging from those in which subversive activity by an inchoate insurgent group is but a potential threat to those in which antigovernment incidents occur frequently and display organization and forethought" (US Army Command and General Staff College 1986: 171).³² A hangover from the Cold War, during which "disloyal feelings more than seditious acts" (Lutz 1997: 138) became an arena of state monitoring and control, recent counterinsurgency operations have further diffused distinctions between citizens and suspects, transforming entire populations into "inchoate" sources of fear, threat, and insecurity. However, since the threat is "potential," and not clearly marked or identifiable, the particular construction of subversion as "incipient" creates a very different logic of warfare: one that is based on quarantining and treating the "suspect," rather than on eliminating and annihilating the enemy.

In the Indian context, widespread anxieties of "disloyalty" are pervasive, given that ethnic and religious minorities from Punjab, Kashmir, and the Northeast have participated in armed insurgencies against the Indian state or "shown [incontrovertible] signs of incipient militancy" (Prakash 2008: 120). There is also the widespread fear that many tribal minorities might resort to violence to resist India's economic policies that deprive them of their land and resources. Several religious and tribal minorities thus haunt the national imaginary with an unrealized and yet ever present specter of violence and terror. Counterinsurgency operations in India are therefore not just directed at insurgents/terrorists; they tackle the category of "alienated" populations or incipient terrorists, mostly religious, ethnic, or tribal minorities who remain peripheral to the national vision of unity, progress, and cohesion.

Although the specter of "tribal" or "ethnic" insurgence alarms the Indian psyche, the nation feels particularly susceptible to Muslim invasion, tyranny, and terrorism (Rai 2003). Perceptions of Muslim disloyalty, as Rai (2003) argues, have "mark[ed] India's postcoloniality," although the recent "good and evil framing of the global war on terror" has accentuated "longstanding communal distinctions between Hindus and Muslims" in India (Jones 2009b: 290). Discourses of terrorism are merged imperceptibly with the figure of a Muslim who is no longer portrayed only as "ignorant" and "uncivilized," but as vicious and malevolent. Exacerbated by the myth of their growing numbers due to their overpopulation and immigration, as well as their alleged allegiance to Islamic fundamentalism, the discourse of Muslim untrustworthiness is both pervasive and widespread.

Such accounts of Muslim untrustworthiness are common even in Ladakh, as many scholars have previously argued (Aggarwal 2004; van Beek 1998a). A thoroughly established parameter for judging national affiliations in Ladakh, religious identity became the key to assess one's patriotism and loyalty to the

nation-state in the 1990s (Aggarwal 2004; van Beek 1999). Martijn van Beek and Ravina Aggarwal discuss in detail the political context of the 1990s when Buddhists of Ladakh promoted themselves as India's "true patriots" to legitimize their claims for a UT status and seek independence from Kashmir. Muslims, however, were promoted as anti-national and deeply unpatriotic.³³ The Kashmir imbroglio and the global angst against Islamic fundamentalism further reinforced perceptions of Muslim disloyalty in Ladakh. The framing of Ladakhi Muslims as disloyal and unpatriotic was therefore the outcome of the global and national obsession with Islamic jihad, as much as it was the product of Ladakh's contentious religious politics.

While allegations of mistrust and disloyalty have fueled relations of discord and animosity between Buddhists and Muslims since the 1990s, assumptions about Muslim disloyalty also structured the military's post-war interventions in Ladakh (see Aggarwal and Bhan 2009). A noted newspaper journalist, writing after the end of the Kargil war, illuminates the nature of such anxieties:

That militancy had made some inroads into Ladakh had become apparent during the war itself. But far more disturbing was the realization that villagers in the valleys below the LoC (Line of Control) had known that there were groups of armed men moving around on the ridges for the previous three months. But not one had considered it necessary to inform the army until finally a lone Buddhist shepherd did so in early May. It thus became clear that while militancy might not have actually taken root in Ladakh, the precondition for it—alienation from the government and the State—was already far advanced.³⁴

Indeed, an implicit yet foundational premise underlines this excerpt: that alienation among Ladakhis had advanced to an extent that while they had not taken up arms against the Indian state, they could potentially start an armed insurgency if appropriate measures were not taken to "redress" their "alienation." "That militancy had made inroads into Ladakh" was used repeatedly to justify both the rationale of Operation Sadhbhavna and congratulate the military for "stemming" the spread of terrorism in the region. The following excerpt by Navnita Chadha Behera further documents the nature of allegations against Kargilis in the post-war period (2000; see also Aggarwal 2004: 211):

The massive scale and an uncanny accuracy of the Pakistani artillery shelling that resulted in the destruction of an ammunition depot worth Rs. one billion and a television tower, followed by the shelling of the district and military administration headquarters in the nearby Baru area, [that] led the security forces to suspect that Pakistani artillery was being directed from the Kargil area by an enemy agent with a high frequency wireless set. The Indian Army's recovery of Indian cement bags (purchased from Dras for casting slabs to fortify bunkers), receipts of payments made to a mason in Dras and the Pakistan Army's 'out-passes' to Srinagar from the intruders' bunkers in Dras,

also indicated a possible and substantial collusion between some local citizens and Pakistani intruders.

Founded on an array of arbitrary although unconfirmed reports, Kargilis were believed to have “colluded” with “Pakistani intruders” to wage a war against India. Although “militancy had not yet taken root” in Ladakh, the military needed to wipe out the “preconditions” for future incidents of treason or subversion against the Indian state. Ravina Aggarwal and I have argued that Sadhbhavna’s preemptive goals were anchored less in actual incidents of terrorism, and more in stereotypic analogies between Kashmir and Ladakh (2009). Here, I show that Sadhbhavna (at least for many officers who worked on the ground) was based on a finer, albeit deeply problematic, understanding of Ladakh’s complex religious and ethnic politics. Lt. Colonel Mahesh’s following comment best illustrates this point:

See . . . in Ladakh there are three distinct groups: Muslims, Tibetans, and Dards. Muslims have always been pro Kashmir . . . whatever Kashmiris have been saying . . . even Muslims in Ladakh have been talking about that. The Tibetans have totally been . . . generally, not, you know . . . neither this side nor that side, but Tibetans know that India does a lot for them. However, Dards are . . . totally neutral. So they did not have any kind of feeling . . . whether it’s India or Pakistan. They are totally neutral.

Lt. Colonel Mahesh’s attempt to categorize religion communities based on their national loyalty is pernicious since it creates and solidifies regimes of unequal and differentiated citizenship. Although several military officials were reluctant to share their anxieties regarding Muslims, “labeling faith a matter of benign habit rather than a political ideology of difference,” others, like Colonel Mahesh, were more vocal in expressing their distrust against Muslims:

It was only after independence that Rajakars . . . the Indian army was deployed here under Operation Akbar. Pakistanis were pushed out of this area. Their line of communication was cut and therefore they had to go back to Pakistan. As far as these people are concerned [referring to Kargilis, in general, including the Brogpas], it is only after 1999 that they are cut off from Pakistan. It is only after 1999 that a clear line has been drawn. Now they can’t do anything. What is it called? Social alienation has only happened after 1999. These people share the same language, the same customs. But, yes, Muslims have a soft spot for people across the border. I think it is religious and social, not political.

According to Colonel Mahesh, a “clear line” now disrupted quotidian interactions between families and friends who until 1999 were not completely “cut off from Pakistan.” Their alliances with Pakistanis were not “political,” although abrupt disruptions in their network of family and friends could lead to widespread “social alienation,” the Colonel surmised.

Colonel Mahesh's emphasis on "social alienation" signaled the Indian military's post-war emphasis on alienated populations who drifted precariously between loyalty and treason. Sadhbhavna's logic that Muslims have a "soft spot for people across the border" justified their stance of why the "army need[ed] to secure the nation's rear before it could focus on the frontline" (*Times of India*, 6 June, 2001).

Sadhbhavna, therefore, excised Muslims from the body of the nation as traitors while simultaneously incorporating them through tropes of "redress" and "de-alienation." At least in its initial years, Sadhbhavna's "humanist" impulse was applauded by Kargili Muslims who claimed that no other state program was as committed to their welfare or improvement. Such perceptions changed subsequently as the military established its extensive presence in the region and occupied vast swaths of local land and territory, displacing people and threatening their water resources, animals, and pasturelands. While I will return to this point later in the book, here I want to emphasize that despite the military's initial attempts to include them within India's geobody, perceptions of Muslim untrustworthiness that underlined Sadhbhavna heightened enduring bifurcations between the nation and its others.³⁵

Kargili Muslims disputed such claims, passionately rejecting their characterization as India's "dubious patriots" (Aggarwal 2004: 218; see also Aggarwal and Bhan 2009: 20). They narrated stories of wartime bravado and specific instances of loyalty to India, stories that played a critical part in helping Kargilis distance themselves from the politics in Kashmir. Asgar Ali Karbalai, a prominent politician and religious leader of Kargil, elaborated further:

When Arjun Ray came to Ladakh after 1999 and 14 Corps was established, we told him clearly that Muslims had some reservations with the Indian Army. When he asked us why, we told him that in 1948 the Indian army couldn't have crossed Zojila without our help; in 1975, these peaks couldn't have been won if we had not supported the Indian army. Despite this, we Muslims have always been treated as unpatriotic. During the Kargil war, our chief minister, Farooq Abdullah, in front of General Krishanpal of 15 Corps and other ministers, blamed us for supporting Pakistani intrusions into Indian territory.

Karbalai further noted:

I told General Krishanpal and Farooq Abdullah clearly that we were not Kashmiri Muslims. We were Shi'a Muslims and if we had to do anything, we would do it openly. Actually, later I realized in a meeting with General Budhwar that Farooq Abdullah and General Krishanpal were misled by a tape they had intercepted with a lady speaking in what seemed to be some variant of the Pashto language. I told them that this language is not spoken in any part of Kargil. If you find any person speaking this language, I will believe that Kargilis are terrorists.

In these excerpts, it is clear how Karbalai resented the military's constant vigil over civilian populations and the unfounded allegations of treason and espionage against them. Distinguishing himself from the Sunni Muslims of Kashmir who were involved in a protracted struggle against the Indian military, Karbalai asserted the differences of morality and character that separated Kargilis from Kashmiris. In particular, he was deeply offended by Farooq Abdullah's allegations that Kargilis had encouraged Pakistani intrusions into Indian territory before and during the Kargil war.

Yet it was also clear that such assertions had become profoundly meaningful only after 1999 as Kargil's strategic and political status changed overnight because of a war that "came as a surprise to the Indian government, Army, and [India's] intelligence agencies."³⁶ Kargili leaders denied that they had ever organized or participated in protest rallies to support the Kashmiri cause for *aazadi* or that they had encouraged Kargilis to take up arms against India. Too worried that such rare and fleeting moments from their past when they might have uttered a statement or two in favor of Kashmiris might be construed as definitive statements about their political infidelity, Kargili leaders vehemently denied any possible comparisons with their Kashmiri counterparts. Furthermore, in a context where military-led operations, including Sadhbhavna, were firmly rooted in divisive religious politics and the need to surveil populations for what Lutz (1997: 159) calls their "politically subversive interiorities," it fostered a culture of fear and surveillance amidst rising concerns about treason, subversion, and espionage.

While Sadhbhavna's implications for inflaming religious politics have been elaborated elsewhere (Aggarwal and Bhan 2009), here I turn my attention to the ways in which the emergent religious politics over Sadhbhavna shaped Brogpa subjectivities and alliances in the post-war period. Unlike their Buddhist and Muslim counterparts, many military officers (at least those who worked with them closely) viewed Brogpas as "neutral" because of their distinct ethnic and quasi-religious identities, a neutrality that was often also read as an indication of their undetermined loyalty for the Indian nation-state (see Chapter 3).

Undetermined loyalties, flexible citizenship

The fact that Brogpas' quasi-Buddhist identities did not neatly map onto growing social distinctions between Buddhists and Muslims, confused military officials, who considered Brogpas more "innocuous" compared to their Muslim counterparts, but less trustworthy compared to Ladakh's "Tibetan" or Buddhist populations. For instance, building on Lt. Colonel Mahesh's differentiated scheme of religious loyalties that I described earlier, Lt. Colonel Verma, who was stationed in Yaldor, shared his opinions with me as he was supervising the preparations for a Sadhbhavna event in Garkone:

The other day, in a mosque in Kargil, it was announced that since there has been some rigging in the recent elections, people will have to resort to militancy. Brogpas . . . we are not worried, why should they do it? They will

be sandwiched. But Muslims . . . we are worried about. Muslim villages are a problem. Brogpas can be sorted out any time. Their history tells us that they are not martial. They have not fought any battle so far . . .

Brogpas did not pose much of a threat because they were a minority and could be “sorted out” any time, according to Colonel Verma. While based largely on their miniscule population in Ladakh, his perception of Brogpa innocuousness was also shaped by a racialized description of Brogpa history, one that relied on colonial and Orientalist demarcations between “martial” and “non-martial” races. Their characterization as “neutral,” however, did not exempt Brogpas from the burdens of disloyalty or treason against India. For instance, while explaining to me why the military needed to conduct Sadhbhavna activities in Brogpa villages, Lt. Colonel Dua said the following:

The medicines we distribute are spare medicines from our supplies. Basically, we know that if infiltration takes place, then this is going to be one of the base villages. Because whoever comes here will take two days to cross over and will have to stay in this village for a couple of days. So, my idea is that I should be told of any such infiltration, if it is taking place. Otherwise, it is not my duty to distribute medicines.

Although Brogpas were less likely to take up arms against India, according to Lt. Colonel Dua, theirs was an undetermined loyalty that needed to be monitored and surveilled closely. Despite their wartime contributions (see Chapter 3), Lt. Colonel Dua felt that Brogpas, whether voluntarily or reluctantly, could support Pakistani incursions in the future. According to the Kargil Committee Report, a Pakistani reconnaissance mission was sent to Gharkun village (*sic*) in 1997 and a Pakistani patrol base was also established in Yaldor.³⁷ Although the Indian military launched an operation to “apprehend the infiltrators” in the summer of 1998, the infiltrators never returned.³⁸

Such reports solidified the perception that Brogpa “neutrality” could prove detrimental to the military’s long-term security interests. The politics of militarization once again unfolded in the language of potentiality as Lt. Colonel Dua viewed Brogpas as passive and neutral subjects who could, if not actively engage in sedition, provide temporary refuge to Pakistani insurgents. Since Pakistani infiltrators in 1999 had settled in high pasturelands that belonged to Brogpas, Lt. Colonel Dua outlined the urgent need for the military to build enough credibility in the region that no such “infiltration” could go undetected in the future. Distributing “spare medicines” was therefore an effective way to win the community’s trust as well as “monitor” it closely without appearing too intrusive.

In a political scenario where the Kargil war was only an episode in the protracted history of fear and suspicion exacerbated by the events of 9/11 and the attack on the Indian Parliament, insecurity and paranoia were the new optic through which communities were rendered visible, a point also corroborated by Ravina

Aggarwal's vivid description of Achinathang's complex post-war social order (2004: 217). Therefore, like many other events that preceded it, Sadhbhavna, too, intensified political anxieties that relied on reductive stereotypes about Ladakhi allegiances and collective identities. However, instead of "penalizing" them for abetting Pakistani intrusions, for which they had little, if any, evidence, the military decided to use Brogpas (and other border communities) as local sources of military intelligence so no future cross-border infiltration could go unreported. Along with energizing the military's intelligence operations, Sadhbhavna intended to normalize the culture of suspicion and insecurity in the village, a culture that fractured the social order while encouraging Brogpas to internalize the military's regulatory regimes of surveillance and counterinsurgency. In the next section, I ask: how did Brogpas engage with and interpret discourses that cast them as partial citizens or as incipient terrorists? To what extent were such discourses of insecurity and state paranoia internalized as well as resisted? How did Brogpas, wittingly or unwittingly, partake in structures of surveillance that further strengthened the military's hold over their lives?

In this section, I return to Norboo's story, not so much to explore narratives of heroism (see Chapter 3) as to draw attention to Norboo's vulnerabilities in the post-war period. As someone who symbolized deeply entrenched class and gendered fractures of the post-war period, his mixed religious lineage and "outsider" status contributed further to his contested status as a war hero. At the core of such contestations, I argue, were deeply-held anxieties about Brogpa religious "liminalities." For fear that they might be branded "disloyal," Brogpas became overwhelming wary of their "liminal" religiosity and increasingly disowned their mixed religious and ethnic histories in favor of a "purer" Buddhist identity. In a context where discourses of religious purity have historically framed social and political conflicts, especially since the 1990s (Aggarwal 2004; van Beek 1999), many such anxieties, as I demonstrate next, coalesced around Norboo's "mixed religious lineage."

Cultures of insecurity

In August 2003, on a hot afternoon as I prepared to leave my room for the next round of interviews, Norboo walked into my room, looking pale and distraught. Sensing that something was bothering him, I settled him down and offered to make tea. Norboo looked around furtively, unsure of whether or not he could confide in me. He finally decided to talk. Norboo wanted me to write a confidential letter to the military commander stating that Norboo's life was in danger and were he killed, the villagers should be held responsible for his untimely death. What could potentially explain Norboo's deep sense of fear and betrayal, I wondered?

Despite his celebrated status as a war hero, the events leading up to the Kargil war were far from clear, a longstanding issue that created several political factions and heightened existing class and gendered divisions in the village (see Chapter 3). Along with reinforcing divisions of status and wealth, however, the Kargil war also deepened Brogpa anxieties about their location as a quasi-Buddhist group.

As already argued, in a context where religious differences had become strongly indicative of patriotism and loyalty, Brogpa religious liminality signaled to the military an inchoate nationalism: one that did not have the potency to translate into militant sub-nationalism, yet remained dangerously wavering and irresolute.

Within this context, everyday discussions in the village were overwhelmingly infused with uncertainties about religious identities, belongingness, and citizenship. Ravina Aggarwal also discusses in intricate detail the “atmosphere of suspicion” created in the wake of the Kargil war, although she points out that Buddhist and Muslim communities in the village of Achinathang partially resisted such impositions of fear and insecurity (2004: 214). With their relatively recent history of religious conversions, however, Brogpas were far more self-conscious about their liminal Buddhist identities and, consequently, of their place in the complex religious and political landscape of Ladakh.

Therefore, in the post-war period, they relied increasingly on their “Buddhist” identities to prove their “loyalties” even as they asserted their cultural distinction in other social and political contexts (see Chapter 1). Institutional attempts to preserve their culture through punitive measures such as *chatpa* focused mostly on externalities of culture, such as their dance forms and customary attire. Simultaneously, however, there was an emphasis on reassessing their cultural practices within newly emerging tenets of Buddhism: practices that confounded distinctions between Islam and Buddhism were shunned and ridiculed. Individuals were slighted as Muslims if they used *khoda*, a Persian term for God instead of using its Tibetan variant, *dkon mchog*; instead of burying their dead, they now cremated them; sacrificial ceremonies that were once integral to their rituals were now rare; consumption of meat was severely discouraged, and, more importantly, Brogpas with mixed religious histories were castigated as disloyal and untrustworthy.³⁹

Amidst deeply felt insecurities about their religious identities, the military’s mounting distrust of Muslims further contributed to a social order in which religious affiliations were not only an index of patriotism but also significant grounds for earning small favors from the military. Several incidents narrated to me by Norboo and a Muslim informant in Gurgurdho, Gulam Mohammad, highlight how some middle-cadre army officers favored Buddhists over Muslims in everyday village disputes. For instance, in a widely discussed land dispute between Charopa, an ex-Indo-Tibetan Border Force (ITBF) recruit and his Muslim neighbor, the military officer-in-charge directed the Muslim neighbor to give up his claims on the disputed portion of the land without any evidence to support his judgment. In a similar instance, a minor fight between two women over the distribution of irrigation water transformed into a religious conflict when Muslims were accused of destroying the Buddhist *gumpa*. Enraged, Buddhists from Dartsigs and Gurgurdho complained to the military headquarters to punish the offenders. Yet again, without any prior investigations, one of the officers called up the Divisional Commissioner of Police (DSP) who also happened to be a Buddhist. In the meantime, the LBA got involved in the matter and the conflict worsened. However, because the local police in Batalik were predominantly

Muslim, they prepared the case in favor of the Muslim woman by claiming that she was pregnant and had no intentions of harming the *gumpa*. After a tremendous hue and cry the case was finally settled, although it further worsened existing relationships between Muslims and Buddhists.

Muslims from Gurgurdho resented such incidents and claimed that the military shared a “relationship of trust and camaraderie with Buddhists,” but not with Muslims whom they saw as “outsiders.” According to Gulam Mohammad:

Just because we don’t eat with non-Muslims does not mean we are not Indian . . . it does not mean that we don’t belong here. Arjun Ray tried hard to counter this bias against us. But when such things happen, we strongly feel that the army invariably favors the Buddhists.

Moreover, according to Gulam Mohammad, the military was poorly acquainted with Muslim customs and monitored their homes during festivals such as the *Shab-e-Baraat* when Muslims lit up their homes and stayed up all night to mark an important occasion on their lunar calendar: “Who knows what they think . . . maybe the army thinks that we are passing signals since they see lot of lights on the other side of the border as well.” Such mistrust against Muslim allegiance was not limited to the military but was pervasive even among Brogpas, who, too, relied on religious demarcations to assess trust and loyalty. So, for instance, in the ongoing dispute over whether or not Norboo was a genuine “war hero,” his detractors invoked his mixed religious history to undermine his loyalty and patriotism for India. This was most forcefully brought to my attention by Khyentse who was one of the most vocal critics of the military’s attempts to promote Norboo as a war hero.

One morning as I walked with Khyentse toward the *changra* to meet with the *tehsildar* who was in the village to allocate funds for safety bunkers, Khyentse complained bitterly about the existing corruption in the village. He claimed that the villagers had pocketed the money without ever constructing the bunkers for their safety. Many others who did construct bunkers never received the money. By then, I knew the routine quite well: whenever reminded of the war, Khyentse spoke of how the war had “brought out the worst in people.” The war, he said, had intensified greed and corruption. Besides, the insufficient resources that trickled into the village for their “safety and rehabilitation” had created mutual discord and contention. However, this morning, Khyentse was particularly angry: a crew of journalists and reporters had arrived in the village to interview Norboo and document his wartime contributions. Upset that Norboo was getting an unfair share of rewards while villagers fought over trivial government compensations, Khyentse pointed to his heart, spread his arms wide, and said:

I knew from deep within my heart (*hoi*) that Norboo and Razak were traitors. Before they informed the Indian army, they were earning money through Pakistanis. How can you even trust them? Razak is still a Muslim and Norboo’s father was Muslim when he migrated to Garkone.

Khyentse's insecurity must be framed within the complex histories of religious identities, settlement patterns, and community formations that refused to follow national templates of inclusion and exclusion, but were now over-determined by nationalist tropes of identity and citizenship. Local resentment to Norboo's "unwarranted heroism" did not just reflect a class and gendered critique of his newfound status (Chapter 3), but also brought to the fore apprehensions about his ambiguous religious lineage. Born to Muslim parents who had migrated to Garkone from the neighboring village of Sot and earned their citizenship by virtue of their residence and obligatory communal labor, Norboo reflected the growing chasm between *khaas* Brogpas and those whose recent histories were of mixed religious or ethnic origins. Factions that rejected Norboo's "first informer" status used his mixed religious lineage to depict his fractured patriotism, branding him as a double agent who had traded with Pakistanis before he became a designated spy for the Indian army. In their angry outbursts, villagers asserted their claims by documenting his supportive role of Pakistani incursions until 1997 and threatened to turn him in. "If we inform the CBI about this, do you think he will be spared?" they claimed.⁴⁰

Perceptions of distrust against Muslim outsiders had solidified during the war, especially after two brothers were picked up by the Indian military as potential suspects for what was later termed a "routine interrogation." Although common in other border villages as documented by Aggarwal (2004), the case in Garkone was slightly complicated. The two brothers were from different villages and followed different religious faiths. Kalon, who had converted to Buddhism, now lived in Garkone, while his Muslim brother, Hussain, lived in the neighboring village of Gurgurdho. Responsible primarily for herding the family's livestock, he spent most of his time in the pastureland that happened to be in close proximity to the India-Pakistan border.

During the Kargil war, the Indian army held a joint meeting that included villagers from Garkone, Dartsigs, and Gurgurdho to announce that Razak (Kalon's Muslim name) and Hussain were suspected of having abetted Pakistani incursions. Without any concrete evidence to back their allegations, the army wagered that Razak and Hussain could either be brothers or they could even belong to different households. Villagers were told that anybody who knew the whereabouts of the brothers must immediately report this to the army. Although no one volunteered any information, the army picked Kalon and Hussain from their respective villages. Kalon, who was sick at the time, was blindfolded with his *qamarband* until he was handed over to the military headquarters in Kargil. The villagers expected them back by nightfall, but the brothers did not return for the next three days, during which time they were beaten naked on concrete floors and forced to divulge information they never possessed.

Even though no charges were pressed against Kalon and Hussain and they were eventually released, incidents such as these pulled the social fabric asunder and instilled in most Brogpas a fear and mistrust toward their Muslim neighbors and community members. The "recent Buddhist converts" among them were deemed less trustworthy. Individuals like Razak, Madi, Norboo and many others who

were either first or second generation converts were seen as less Indian and more Pakistani, especially by factions who were deeply opposed to Norboo's war hero status. Such allegations also disrupted relations of community and solidarity, at least between factions who were deeply committed to either supporting Norboo or "bringing him down."

Norboo's insecurities therefore stemmed from allegations of treason and espionage that were leveled against him by villagers who harbored tremendous resentment against his popularity with the military and a deep distrust of his motives. Painfully aware of such accusations, Norboo was scared and wanted to document his concerns in a letter addressed to the Commanding Officer. "Some villagers want to prove that I was with Pakistanis before I informed the army in 1999. All these people instead of being grateful to me that I saved them . . . that I saved Ladakh . . . are doing this to me," he lamented. However, instead of affirming his mixed religious lineage, Norboo attempted to disavow his past in favor of safer narratives of religious and national purity. Norboo reinforced perceptions of "Muslim" disloyalty by recycling stereotypes about Kashmiri Muslims' deference to Pakistan or by claiming that, however hard they tried, Kargilis could never truly be Indians.

The daily policing of allegiances and alliances was increasingly becoming the norm as post-war anxieties about religion became commonplace. With its reliance on explicit religious caricatures, Sadhbhavna further intensified the post-war configurations of security and intelligence. As "principal tool(s) of state formation and governmentality in the 21st century" (Goldstein 2004), security and surveillance inaugurated new regimes of subjectification that relied on the proliferation of feared bodies and identities.⁴¹ In conjunction with other post-war pursuits that provided jobs and employment to local populations, Sadhbhavna, too, helped reformat or at best erase memories, histories, and identities that were deemed antinational or seditious.

For instance, as stories of unflinching bravado became commonplace in Garkone, so did allegations of treason and espionage. A general sense of insecurity pervaded social relations: no longer could older Brogpas recount stories from 1948 when they were forced to work as porters for the Pakistani army. That their grandfathers had fought alongside Pakistanis in 1948 shocked and embarrassed the youngsters, and they dismissed such stories as proofs of their growing senility. Villagers caught themselves halfway if something they said could rouse suspicion. Brogpas feared being identified as "Muslim" and therefore as subversive or anti-national. As the designated military spy, Norboo was blamed often for turning against his own people, stealing their ID cards and misleading the army by concocting tales of disloyalty and treason. Younger men, on their part, boasted of special surveillance devices they owned, even when these were exaggerated coming-of-age narratives.

An entire corpus of history was redefined as Brogpas monitored their forbidden memories to forge newer identities and assert themselves as ideal Indian citizens. Surveillance was exalted as national service, an activity that affirmed patriotic fervor and sensibilities but (as in Norboo's case) could even fetch national awards

and accolades. However, their motive to “safeguard” the borders tore the local social fabric apart, transforming what was once normative and routine into something exceptional and transgressive. Communitarianism was replaced by vigilantism, as the military’s regulatory mechanisms were internalized and dramatically reinforced through a range of post-war interventions. Over time, the normalization of policing was achieved by fostering a culture of surveillance so local people became active participants, not mere victims, in the military’s fight against incipient subversion and terrorism.

Conclusion

This chapter explored how the deployment of human security and development in counterinsurgency operations has blurred the tenuous boundary between militarism and humanitarianism. Indeed, through its alliance with the foundational tenets of liberalism, such as human rights, democracy, and development, counterinsurgency has revitalized itself as the new language of progressive militarism: a moral doctrine that no longer relies on coercive violence but also on seemingly apolitical registers of national upliftment and military largesse. Operation Sadhbhavna, too, armed the military with moral powers to discipline insurgent bodies and transform their “hearts and minds.” It was suffused with the vocabulary of compassion, humanism, and morality even as Operation Sadhbhavna became a successful strategy to monitor and regulate non-combatant civilians or “incipient terrorists” in the post-war period. A militarized social order, I argued, was ultimately established through affective tropes of “heart warfare” (*Times of India*, 6 June, 2001).

Despite promoting a unified narrative, Sadhbhavna was perceived differently by military officers who were responsible for upholding its public image and those who ran the program in the border villages of Kargil. Notwithstanding their emphasis on Sadhbhavna’s “instrumentality,” many (although not all) officials who ran the program emphasized relations of familiarity and intimacy with villagers. Not always scripted or rehearsed, such relations were also never perfunctory. Indeed, the increasing reliance of local communities on the military’s goodwill further normalized the military’s extensive presence in areas considered to be India’s “remote” and “backward” peripheries.

The military’s humanitarian gestures, however, operated through and produced bodies that were deemed subversive or potentially subversive, an allegation that recycled and heightened existing fractures between Buddhists and Muslims in Ladakh. For Brogpas, the heightened surveillance of the post-war period intensified anxieties about their “liminal” religious identities, forcing many to disavow their mixed religious pasts and histories. Armed with moral projects of development and compassion, extensive militarism in Ladakh codified acceptable formats of citizenship that were founded on narrowly conceived parameters of loyalty and patriotism. The post-war period witnessed a highly militarized social order in which suspicion and surveillance were thoroughly normalized. The military’s post-war initiatives meant to “develop and improve” border communities

reformatted local bodies, memories, and histories to align them even more firmly with the imperatives of military intelligence and counterinsurgency. *Sadhbhavna* was successful to the extent that it fostered mistrust and suspicion, both of which were ideal for reinforcing the credibility of ideologies and institutions associated with national security. The increasing engagement of the military with civilians created avenues to monitor and regulate populations as well as build local capabilities for vigilantism. Ultimately, ideologies of national security that encouraged policing and surveillance ran counter to *Sadhbhavna*'s rhetoric of human security centered on promoting human potentials and "freedom from fear" (Makaremi 2010: 113).

Notwithstanding its overwhelming emphasis on national security, development was not entirely perfunctory to the military's post-war projects in Ladakh. However, its misrecognition by the military as an apolitical tool of intervention ignored how development had for decades been the primary expression of politics in Ladakh, animating discussions about "regional disgruntlements" as well as shaping local politics around resource allocations and distribution (Aggarwal 2004; Aggarwal and Bhan 2009; van Beek 1999, 2000a, 2001). Development was hardly the "anti-politics machine" that James Ferguson claims it is in his deeply insightful work on Lesotho (1994). Indeed, while the extensive militarization of Kargil was hardly the topic of widespread contestation, the military's vision of development provided a fertile site on which the politics of local resistance played itself out. Chapter 5 documents how development became a site to debate the scope and limits of a democracy that was constrained by the requirements of defense and national security. Notwithstanding its purported role in Ladakh's progress, the military's institutional well-being relied heavily on monopolizing local resources and undermining local livelihoods. The militarized use of public funds and resources severely disabled local governance revealing the vexed nature of democracies in which values of social justice and equity remained subservient to the endless demands of national security.

Acknowledgments

This chapter builds on earlier work entitled "Disarming Violence: Development, Democracy, and Security on the Borders of India" that I co-authored with Ravina Aggarwal in 2009. In that article, we emphasized the securitization of development through Operation *Sadhbhavna* and its implications for religious communities in Ladakh. This chapter seeks instead to historicize Operation *Sadhbhavna* in relation to the past and ongoing counterinsurgency interventions, emphasizing their affective dimensions.

5 Blurred boundaries

It was the second week of April in 2004. Apricot flowers were in full bloom. Villagers expected a bountiful summer harvest of barley and buckwheat, having worked tirelessly in the winter months. The dreary days of winter when Garkonepas climbed to nearby hills to bask in the sun were finally over. As Brogpas celebrated the onset of spring, so did the military. The local army brigade organized an exclusive officers' picnic in the *parianda*, a fertile stretch of land situated directly across the village along the banks of the River Indus. The *parianda* was not a picnic spot. The villagers used portions of it to grow grass for their livestock. Its private and picturesque location, however, provided the military a perfect venue for a spring retreat. As the soldiers set up the venue, several villagers, especially those who owned land in the *parianda*, seethed with anger over the unauthorized use of their fertile grasslands. Picnic tents, garden umbrellas and swings had ruined their land and made it unsuitable for cultivation, they claimed. Days' worth of their labor had thus been wasted.

The day of the picnic, however, high-profile civil dignitaries, including Thupstan Tsewang, a candidate for the upcoming parliamentary elections, and Rigzin Jora, a cabinet minister, were also expected to arrive. Most villagers were busy preparing for their visit. Norboo and a handful of villagers waited on the roadside to greet the army officers, along with the soldiers who were on duty. Soon after, a group of 15 men and women adorned in elaborate headgears and carrying *khataks*, apricots, *damans* and *urnas* also arrived at the roadside to welcome Thupstan Tsewang and his entourage.¹ In no time, a crowd of men and women had assembled on the road, either to greet the military officers or welcome Thupstan and the ministers. Fearing chaos and disorder, the soldiers directed Norboo to clear the road for the army officers. Wangpo, who owned huge tracts of land in the *parianda*, resisted. Facing a group of soldiers who were busy clearing up the road, he said loud enough to attract their attention: "You have no right to use our land for private leisure and force us away from the road." Angrily, Norboo asked Wangpo to lower his tone, all the while avoiding any possible eye contact with him. "Don't you remember how the general forcibly entered Madi's house in 1999 when he refused his orders to place a Bofors gun on his land?" Norboo asked Wangpo. "The war was a different scenario," Wangpo said, "but for the army to occupy the land for leisure was inexcusable." As Norboo

continued to persuade the villagers to yield, Wangpo charged towards him with his drumsticks in an attempt to hit him. A nervous soldier who was witnessing the event yelled at Wangpo: "The military is stretching its resources to implement Operation Sadbhavana. The villagers are at least obligated to extend their support and cooperation in return." Wangpo, in turn, argued that since important political leaders were also expected to arrive at the same time, the villagers had the right to stand on the road to welcome them.

Soon after, the *grongpen* announced that the politicians were arriving later in the day because of unforeseen delays on the road. Although the villagers quit the scene, the event generated prolonged discussions regarding the army's flagrant disregard for community rights and their unwarranted appropriation of vast swaths of local land. More importantly, it raised significant questions about the extent of the military's authority in conflict zones. While villagers recognized that the military could "forcibly" occupy their land for the purposes of defense during active warfare, was the military allowed to do so during times of peace, they asked? Everyday struggles of power and authority between the civil state and the military were pervasive in a state where the army was thoroughly imbricated in everyday governance through its role in employment, education, and development. The military's claims to foster economic and social development had undoubtedly cemented people's overwhelming reliance on military largesse and goodwill as Chapter 4 documented. Caught between conflicting modes of authority and state power, the villagers were unable to reconcile the deep schisms that divided them over questions of loyalty and patronage to the civil administration and the military. The villagers resented the impunity that the military enjoyed in a border zone: the pervasive culture of unaccountability eroded people's basic freedoms such as their right to stand on the road to welcome civilian officials who were responsible for most of the development and welfare initiatives in the region. However, Brogpas were reluctant (and even scared) to question the military's frequent violations of civilian rights. Clearly, then, the contention between the villagers' right to stand on the road and their obligation to clear the way for the incoming army officers was more than just an isolated incident; instead, it indicated deeper moral and political crises of authority on India's borders where community rights and democratic freedom were often subservient to the institutional whims and imperatives of the military.

This chapter seeks to explore how crucial notions of power and legitimacy were constructed and contested in a democracy where the military was deeply integrated into the everyday lives of communities. To what extent was the local administration able to question the projects of defense and security that led to the widespread appropriation of local land, labor, and resources in Kargil? The military in Kargil was powerful; it protected borders as well as provided jobs to populations with little to no avenues for stable employment. To what extent did the military's overwhelming presence in Kargil constrain the ability of the civil administration or the Hill Council to envision alternative avenues for economic growth and development?

In this chapter, I argue that the complexities of the military's role in civic affairs, particularly in the Indian context, cannot be captured using prosaic analyses that either glorify India's democratic success or brand it as a failed state. Instead, what is required is an ethnographic analysis of states and democracies "that remain solidly rooted in the examinations of everyday life" (Krohn-Hansen and Nustad 2005: 21). Despite its recent fascination with the state as an object of analysis, civil-military relations have not received adequate attention in anthropology. Most discussions of democracy have tended to focus on its electoral, performative, technological, or symbolic dimensions (Coles 2004, 2007; Paley 2008). Consequently, an analysis of democracy, especially through the lens of civil-military relations, has fallen strictly within the purview of "international relations, comparative politics and military sociology" (see Schiff 1995; for an exception, see Schirmer 1998).

Many political scientists consider the absence of *coups d'états* in India to be an exception in the history of the developing world, especially in the context of Pakistan's prolonged history of military coups and its extremely fragile democracy (Cohen 1971; Schiff 1995). While such comparisons are useful to develop a schematic understanding of civil-military relations in India, they fail to capture the subtle and insidious ways the values of militarism have consistently eroded the edifice of Indian democracy. Political theorists and anthropologists emphasize the need to disrupt conceptual boundaries between seemingly disparate political forms in order to reveal how "political forms are not neatly differentiable but rather complexly intertwined," reminding us that political labels and categories perform complex ideological work (Paley 2002: 471; see also Arias and Goldstein 2010). Rather than take political formations as *a priori* or self-evident, we must ask how ideals of rights, freedom, and democracy are highly contested categories deployed by those with "strong interests in particular definitions" while disputed by others who are "differently situated in relation [to] power" (ibid.). Such insights are particularly useful when analyzing political contexts in which democracy does not necessarily extend fundamental rights and freedoms but acts as an ideological foil to check citizen dissent, quell political debates, and legitimize counterinsurgency as an integral aspect of everyday governance and state-making. For instance, Nandini Sundar (2011), in her analysis of the Maoist insurgency in India, discusses the role of violence in Indian democracy. Even the Parliament and independent statutory commissions, she points out, fail to confront state-sponsored armed gangs and vigilante groups that target *adivasis* under the pretext of defeating Maoist terrorism (ibid.: 62). Samaddar rightly argues that in a country where "at least 5 crores of Indians live under military rule" (1995: 8), a "stunning array of legislations and ordinances" imposed to quell "student unrest, tribal agitations, communal disturbances, rural unrests" establish the military's presence in public life through legal and constitutional means (ibid.: 9). It is by "banishing the recalcitrant" to the military that the Indian state sustains the façade of its democratic governance, Samaddar contends (ibid.: 8).

To make democracy an object of anthropological scrutiny, then, is to question its uncritical analysis in political thought and to move beyond its formal or

institutional analyses (Spencer 2007: 74). An ethnographic approach allows me to illuminate the everyday construction and dissolution of democracy on India's borders, and to demonstrate that the boundaries between democracy and militarism in Kargil are precarious and unstable rather than being fixed and secure. Hence, seemingly mundane events such as the one discussed at the start of this chapter are far from innocuous; these reflect the tenuous nature of community and individual rights, social justice, and democratic governance within the context of Kargil's rising militarism.

In the first segment of this chapter, I analyze the growing deployment of the military for a series of internal problems in post-Independence India, ranging from post-disaster relief operations to the maintenance of law and order to the explicit use of force or violence against "subversive" populations. Such wide-ranging operations, I argue, considerably strengthened the military's role in civilian life, as India's military personnel were "deployed in the aid-to-civil role in greater numbers, for longer periods of time, and with increasing frequency" (Mallick 2007: 69; see also Kazi 2010). I then explore the many discursive strategies that the military used to represent itself as an enabler of a peaceful social order and a champion of social change in the context of Ladakh's fractious religious and ethnic politics. Notwithstanding its rhetoric, the military's institutional longevity relied heavily on monopolizing local resources and undermining local livelihoods. The next section argues that the rhetoric of progress and development did little to relieve the material disenfranchisement of people who were compelled to give up their land and resources to sustain the war machine. The flagrant militarization of public funds and resources severely disabled local governance, revealing the vexed nature of democracies in which the values of social justice and equity remained subservient to the demands of a security state. I finally discuss the ways in which quotidian conflicts over resource use and compensations, and access and regulation through military checkpoints highlighted an uneasy relationship between the civil state and the military even as the underlying logic of a national security state remained largely unchallenged.

The military in an "activist" role

Many scholars who work on civil-military relations assert the importance of keeping militaries "physically and ideologically [separate] from political institutions," mostly to prevent domestic coercion and contain the undue influence of the armed forces in domestic politics (Schiff 1995: 7).² However, as Anuradha Chenoy reminds us, to sustain a robust democracy, it is not enough to keep the military from seeking political domination (Chenoy 2002: 7, cited in De Mel 2007: 23); when militaries are deployed to "save the nation or to solve political problems," such roles inevitably extend the military's power over civilian life, and weaken democratic forms of governance and state-making (De Mel 2007: 23). In India, despite the relative strength of civil institutions, the military's role in internal politics has considerably increased due to the inability of the civil

state to curb Hindu-Muslim violence, maintain a secular state, and check institutionalized corruption (Kazi 2010; Schiff 1995: 19). Counterinsurgency initiatives in the Northeast, Kashmir, and Punjab further blurred the crucial distinctions between “law enforcement and traditional war-fighting missions” (Gupta 2003: 2), reflecting the “disintegration of India’s dominant political institutions” (Ganguly 1991: 22).

The effects of hyper-militarization, however, surpassed institutional implications: the militarization of internal security transformed political dissent into new pathologies of unrest and violence, sanctioning a vicious cycle of state-sponsored brutality and mayhem. In Kashmir, for instance, the army was guaranteed unlimited powers through multiple constitutional provisions, such as the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) and the Disturbed Area Act, draconian measures that have continued to sanction unprecedented violence against civilian populations since the area was deemed “disturbed” in the 1990s. The Indian military’s brutal regime of extra-judicial killings, enforced disappearances, and many other counterinsurgency tactics has established, many would argue, a “civic and legal state of exception” in Kashmir (Chatterji 2010).

Ladakh is the only province in the state of J&K where AFSPA and other such provisions were not implemented. However, militarization in Ladakh was widespread; in addition to the numbers of military personnel or battalions assigned to protect the borders with China and Pakistan, militarization deeply pervaded the local economy, society, and popular culture. From posters extolling the virtues of the Indian military to films and songs celebrating military valor and bravado, the institutions and ideologies of militarism profoundly shaped the lives, livelihoods, and aspirations of most Ladakhis.

The militarization of Ladakh began in 1948 soon after the *Kabayili* raid brought large swaths of Ladakhi territory under the control of the Pakistani militia, ultimately leading to the division of Ladakh between India and Pakistan. Subsequent wars fought with China and Pakistan in 1965 and 1971 escalated cross-border tensions even further. But concerted and widespread measures to expand the strength and reach of the Indian military and ensure its war preparedness were undertaken after the gross intelligence and military failures of the Kargil war. In order to build its defenses against future incursions, the military established a new military headquarters called the 14 Corps in Leh; increased its reliance on local men as porters and spies (see Chapters 3 and 4); established new army brigades in the vicinity of border villages; opened a new forward base; built roads where none had previously existed; and occupied vast swaths of prime land for defense and weapons training. Also, military recruitment was made more lucrative by converting the Ladakh Scouts, which started out as a paramilitary unit, into an army regiment along the lines of Pakistan’s Northern Light Infantry that recruited men from the Northern Areas (Ahmed 2009).

In addition to strengthening its combat capabilities, the Indian military also attempted to reinvent its image through humanitarian gestures to win people’s “hearts,” a move that aligned well with India’s growing reliance on international

humanitarian assistance as a “notable instrument” of its foreign policy (Meier and Murthy 2011: 6). According to Major Dayal, a young and forward-looking officer, the Indian army was “stuck in its old ways.”

[It was not just] our weapons that needed to be upgraded but also the ways we conduct ourselves. Our challenges in Ladakh are not all that different from our struggles elsewhere. It is to shed our colonial image and establish better relationships with civilians, although Ladakh’s strategic location reinforces the urgency of the task in this region.

Several model villages were set up in Ladakh to showcase the military’s new experiment with social welfare and development. Indeed, Ladakh was hailed as a “bold experiment,” one that proved the benefits of the military’s new approach in which “every little problem [was] getting a compassionate response from men trained to kill.”³ No longer limited to participating in post-disaster relief initiatives or building better and quicker infrastructure to facilitate efficient governance, the military profoundly extended its reach into civilian life through education, medical care, and a range of development and aid to civil initiatives.

The military’s appropriation of development was not arbitrary: an important social, economic and political project undertaken by the Indian state since its independence, development had been the most predominant expression of state-making in postcolonial India. Ladakh witnessed exclusive development provisions such as affirmative action policies to improve backward communities, decentralization initiatives to encourage participatory governance, border development funds and other such subsidies to foster state presence and expansion in the region (Aggarwal 2004: 8; van Beek 2000a). Indeed, like elsewhere, under-development was not experienced only in material terms. It infused local struggles for autonomy, decentralization, and participation, and shaped people’s individual and collective identities, a state of being Akhil Gupta identifies as the “postcolonial condition” (1998: 10; see also van Beek 2000a). The postcolonial state, too, derived its legitimacy by consistently reinventing its institutional mechanisms to situate itself as an arbiter of development. The Hill Council was thus the quintessential expression of a developmental state in Ladakh (see Chapter 2). Administrative and structural changes that involved an overwhelming emphasis on decentralization and grassroots empowerment through autonomous district councils had considerably redefined the stakes associated with development. Not only did decentralization make participatory development the popular idiom of governance, it also transformed the very form and substance of local politics. For many in Kargil, participatory development was an opportunity to gain status and upward mobility. While becoming a Councillor was about promoting grassroots development, it was also a way to secure a respectable livelihood or, at best, spearhead a political career.

Clearly then, development and the ideologies of modernity and progress were braided into the political, economic, and social life of communities.

However, participatory forms of development had not equalized opportunities for economic growth as much as they had spawned an intense politics of recognition that relied heavily on discourses of identity and difference (van Beek 1998a, 1999, 2000a). Development budgets and policies, it was claimed, had exacerbated regional, religious, and ethnic divisions, and worsened intra-village and familial politics. Indeed, in 2009, a cluster of villages jointly wrote an application to the Chief Executive Councillor (CEC), asking him to “stop allocating funds and budgets” that had contributed nothing to improve the state of their villages. Instead, the partisan allocation of funds, they argued, had fragmented their villages by creating irreconcilable divisions among friends and families.

In a region riven with ethnic, religious, and familial conflicts over unequal and partisan forms of development, the military promoted itself as the champion of equitable rights for populations who were still “remote” and “backward.” In order to prevent the further escalation of religious discord in Ladakh, the military charged itself with the task of ameliorating social grievances—mainly through Sadhbhavna’s development initiatives as well as other gestures that strongly established the military as a compassionate actor in Ladakh. In Kargil, for instance, the military frequently organized a range of youth-oriented activities that included singing and sports competitions. The intention was to harness their “hidden talents” so the youth could engage in “productive” activities and contribute towards a culture of peace and harmony in the region (Ladakh News Service).⁴

Along with co-opting the rhetoric of development and compassion, the military also launched an effective media campaign to portray itself as a harbinger of modernity in a place popularly imagined as backward, remote, and peripheral. Building on its image of being a modern and secular institution, the military promoted itself as a unifying force that challenged social distinctions of race, religion, or caste in a region characterized by divisive regional politics. The military’s self-proclaimed image of “professionalism” and “bipartisanism” was deployed to promote ideals of national belonging and citizenship over place-based identities and affiliations. Situating itself in opposition to parochial state formations such as the Hill Council that allegedly relied on the reinforcement of vernacular identities and championed situated and place-based development, the military’s vision of development was celebrated for encouraging a pan-national sensibility. While the military provided Internet accessibility in local schools, *bharat-darshan* tours, and English-medium education to strengthen national consciousness, the Hill Council’s foundational premise, many officers argued, relied foremost on the logic of cultural autonomy. On the contrary, the military’s alleged aim was to integrate villagers into the “larger society outside their small communities” by exposing them to more cosmopolitan people and places (*The Hindu*, September 10, 2001).

The military’s post-war intervention in Kargil that included an array of development and social welfare initiatives reflected its gradual emergence in Indian political imaginary as a reliable force for nation-building, an institution

that could effectively counter factious politics that threatened to splinter India along religious and ethnic lines. As Samaddar states:

Raised on a diet of myths about India precariously perched between a unified entity and a disintegrated body, the population is led to believe in an activist military role in civilian administration. Politics is thus kept out of the military to make its function more political, more regular in its involvement in “aid to civil” operations.

(1995: 9)

Samaddar rightly argues that the reinvention of the military as an apolitical institution that sustains, rather than threatens, India’s fragile democracy has successfully obscured the military’s growing role in civilian governance. The routine deployment of the military can hurt the credibility of government officials who are often viewed as “inefficient,” “partisan,” or “corrupt,” a portrayal that can disrupt the balance of power between the civil administration and the military. Such disruptions were apparent even in Kargil as the military expanded its role in everyday governance and development. Framed as yet another variant of the “aid to civil” initiative, Operation Sadhbhavna’s vision of civil–military collaboration was fraught with differences of power, resources, and credibility, making the project of democracy in Kargil a deeply ephemeral one. In order to engage with the everyday complexities of democracy in contexts where the welfarist and humanitarian paradigms are co-opted to extend the role of militaries, we must ask: How might democratic governance be constrained if it has to rely on the military’s institutional capabilities to sustain nationalist visions of progress and development? And, in situations like these, how might democratic agendas of equality and social justice become subservient to the demands of defense and national security?

Civil–military relations in the context of Sadhbhavna

As previously discussed, the Indian military deployed tropes of progress and development to reconstitute its image in post-war Kargil. However, Sadhbhavna was meant to supplement, rather than delegitimize, ongoing development initiatives of the Hill Council and the civil government. How then did the military’s newfound role in development and its rhetoric of working concertedly with the civil state play out in practice?

Quite contrary to its rhetoric of collaborating with the civil administration, Sadhbhavna, as Ravina Aggarwal and I discuss elsewhere, led to intense competition between the civil state and the military as the military extended its civic operations in the region (Aggarwal and Bhan 2009). The civil administration blamed the military for its “ad hoc” pursuit of development and for duplicating schools and medical dispensaries in the towns and villages of Ladakh. Many claimed that the military “took undue credit” for its social welfare activities and for projecting a “larger-than-life” image. A civil official noted for instance how

“the military had gotten used to taking over a government building, painting it olive green and claiming it as theirs.”

While the military established its presence through extensive physical infrastructure, it also posed a severe ideological threat to the civil administration in Ladakh. Many junior officers asserted that Sadhbhavna was guided by the moral rhetoric of fairness and bipartisanship, values that the civil administration had consistently eroded due to its inefficiency, nepotism, corruption, and parochialism. In fact, the moral decline of the state and its inaccessibility were held responsible for the prevalence of widespread violence and extremism in the region, especially in Kashmir where the military was deputed in large numbers to “maintain peace and order” (see Aggarwal and Bhan 2009: 12). According to a prominent journalist:

The army has one ingredient that civil administration in India lost long ago. This is accountability for work it promises to do. In the absence of accountability, corruption and extortion have flourished. For the people, therefore, the State had gradually become a predator, and therefore a hostile entity to be shunned. It is obvious that lack of accountability is not confined to Kargil, but is the rule in most of India. Sadhbhavna has shown one way in which this can be got around. But it also raises almost as many questions. If the army takes over the functions of the executive, will it not further de-legitimize the government? If so, what will happen to democracy?

(Jha, *Hindustan Times*, 30 June 2001)

Problems of “corruption,” “extortion,” and the lack of accountability, the journalist claimed, made it impossible for Kargilis to embrace a predatory state that was “hostile” to its own populations. Clearly then, the army was deemed to be ideologically superior to a morally bankrupt state. A range of myths that circulate endlessly in India’s public sphere fuel beliefs about the military’s professionalism and morally righteousness (Sammadar 1995). That the “Army never represses, it helps”; that “the Army is honest, strict”; and, that “it never attacks, only defends,” are popularly held legends that secure the military’s image as “benign and benevolent” despite its involvement in numerous cases of corruption, embezzlement, and unaccounted rapes and killings (*ibid.*: 2).⁵

Although the journalist, too, reinforced the myth of the military’s “accountability,” he feared that the army’s increasing credibility in Kargil could potentially destabilize democratic forms of governance. “What [might] happen to democracy?” if the military became a more desired institution of rule and governance, he asked.

In my conversations with military officials, however, such anxieties were quickly laid to rest. They impassionedly argued that Sadhbhavna was based on the ideal of participatory governance. The military, they claimed, was directed to forge working relationships with and consult key political organizations and representatives of the area, the district administration, religious organizations like the Anjuman-i-Islamiyya and the Khomeini Trust.

Such alliances, however, were much harder to enforce in practice. Although many hailed Sadhbhavna for correcting discriminatory policies of the state

government toward Kargil's Shi'a minority, various religious leaders from the Islamiya school expressed their resentment:

They claim to have convinced orthodox Muslim households to send their daughters to Sadhbhavna schools and vocational training centers, but why is it that they are so overwhelmingly focused on Muslim women? They claim to protect us. But they often harass our women. If this is not "*zulm*" [injustice], then what is?

Others who did not favor the military's promotion of music and sports festivals claimed that the military was distracting Kargili youth from the path of religion.

Along with arousing the ire of key religious leaders in Kargil, Sadhbhavna also ended up creating deep schisms between the civil administration and the military (Aggarwal and Bhan 2009). Despite its mandate to maintain "collaborative relations" with the civil administration, junior military officers often repeated widely held perceptions about the civil administration's apathy and inefficiency. Many in the civil administration refused to extend their support, rejecting Sadhbhavna as a "cosmetic" exercise without any long-term benefits for the populations. Such misgivings were brought to the fore during military-sponsored Sadhbhavna events such as health care camps for which the military invariably failed to elicit support from the civil administration. For instance, in a health festival organized by the army, the officers expressed their resentment toward the civilian administration to their CO:

OFFICER ONE: Sir, it is the civil administration that should have been here to distribute these medicines. Even the local nurse, Angmo, is nowhere to be seen.

ARMY DOCTOR: Sir, I had asked her to be here on the 27th. I have noticed this apathy repeatedly. The civil administration is never forthcoming.

OFFICER TWO: Sir, we had asked for two hours of extra electricity in the village. The guy refused, claiming that the government had warned him against the overconsumption of fuel. We were extending our resources to do what the government should have been doing. Couldn't they give us two hours of extra electricity?

Despite Sadhbhavna's proclaimed mission to invest the military's time and resources in civic activities, most middle-cadre officials considered development to be the responsibility of the civil administration. The absence of civil doctors and nurses during the health camp event was read as a sign of the government's apathy and irresponsibility towards local communities. Another junior officer complained that the civil administration was not at all helping the military foster better ties with the local population:

The civil administration doesn't pose any direct hindrance, I would say. There are indirect hindrances. We must help each other to develop this place and its people. Actually, it hurts when you become part of this place and people

claim that they don't want the army. I think this amicable understanding between the military and the local population has to be created by the local administration.

That the civil administration only posed "indirect hindrances" to achieving the goals of Sadhbhavna was a common refrain among military officials who felt "hurt" for not feeling accepted or welcomed by the local population. Most officers I spoke with had spent a term in Kashmir prior to their posting in Ladakh, so their fears of being rejected were strongly guided by their experiences in Kashmir where local populations viewed the Indian military as an occupying force. In their view, it was the civil administration's job to dispel the army's image as a colonial force.

Several other military personnel whom I spoke with "did Sadhbhavna" because they were forced to obey the high command and not because there was an urgent need to establish better relations with civilian populations. According to Major Sakaria:

Sadhbhavna is called an "operation" because in the army any activity, whether it is related to development or not, gets the name "operation." It is because all the units are involved. However, if you ask me, it is on the orders of the headquarters that we are doing Sadhbhavna. We are not interested in Sadhbhavna. Why should we go and conduct health camps every other day? However, orders have to be executed. Whether I agree or not is immaterial.

The soldier claimed that his unit was involved in Sadhbhavna only because he had "orders" that needed to be "executed." Many soldiers, like Major Sakaria, resented the long working hours and the futility of the medical camps that they were asked to organize. They viewed Sadhbhavna as a drain on the military's resources. Major Sakaria noted:

Most funds are coming from our pocket—you could say that 95 percent of the expenditure comes from our funds. We could have used these funds for our *jawans* [soldiers] who are posted in high-altitude military bases. We could have been provisioning more for them.

For Major Sakaria, the military was "wasting" its resources at the expense of caring for their own personnel since 95 percent of the money for Sadhbhavna came from the defense funds of the Indian military. Such complaints about the misallocation of critical defense resources on civic activities were widespread, and angered many military officers who argued that Sadhbhavna's resources could have been used to "provision better" for soldiers who were stationed in "high-altitude border posts."

Several senior officials I spoke with tried to dispel such "myths." According to Colonel Sharma, while most Sadhbhavna projects were indeed funded by the Ministry of Defense (MoD), there were two separate budgetary guidelines that

Table 5.1 Allocation of BADP and Sadhbhavna funds, 2000–2005

<i>Year</i>	<i>BADP</i>	<i>Sadhbhavna</i>
2000–2001	–	Rs 14,000,000
2001–2002	Rs 2,000,000	Rs 40,000,000
2002–2003	Rs 3,080,000	Rs 30,000,000
2003–2004	Rs 2,800,000	Rs 37,400,000
2004–2005	Not yet allotted	Rs 40,000,000
Total	Rs 7,880,000	Rs 161,400,000

Source: HQ 14 Corps Office, Leh, 2004.

most military personnel were not familiar with. While some allocations were made under the category of Sadhbhavna Funds that entailed projects “solely funded and executed by the army,” most other projects under the Border Area Development Program (BADP) were run primarily on public funding (*Tribune*, May 29, 2003) (Table 5.1).

The multiple budgetary categories made the nature and sources of funding for Sadhbhavna ambiguous and confusing. Col. Pandey, a higher-ranking officer, and a champion of Sadhbhavna, commented further on its budgetary allocations:

See . . . I don’t want to question the general perception among army officers here that Sadhbhavna is a drain on the army’s resources. In order to understand how it is not, we first have to understand what a budget is. When the central government decides to allot the army some budget, it accordingly decides the revenue it has to take from people to make that allocation possible. So . . . it is not the army that loses out; this money is in fact coming from the people of this country.

According to Col. Pandey, Sadhbhavna would have been discontinued instantly had it impinged on the military’s operational budget. “Defense,” in his view, “was the army’s first priority, and Sadhbhavna came only second.” The widespread perception that the military’s needs were being compromised to cater to civic projects existed because Sadhbhavna’s budget was not routed through the Ministry of Home affairs, but was directly allocated by the MoD. The MoD, according to Col. Pandey, provided “a shorter and more efficient bureaucratic chain,” a provision that helped the military circumvent the excessive and routine bureaucratization of mainstream development initiatives. Since “development was not the sole prerogative of any one ministry or department, and the military was deployed in such huge numbers, it only made sense for the army to involve itself in local development,” the Colonel argued. Yet, in his view, taking on civilian roles had in no way impinged on the army’s core budget for defense and security. The additional money allocated for Sadhbhavna was ultimately taxpayers’ money and the army was clearly “not losing out.”

Development, according to the Colonel, was not the prerogative of just one state department. Where its services were urgently required, as in the case of Ladakh, the military was entitled to development budgets like other civil departments. Colonel Pandey's comments collapsed the crucial distinctions between civilian and military roles and normalized the military's access to developmental budgets and funding. Indeed, Sadhbhavna, according to Colonel Pandey, was the solution to the excessive bureaucracy of the civil administration, a limitation that the military's "quick and efficient" decision-making had fully circumvented. However, it was clear that the "lack of bureaucracy" in the military was perceived as a "lack of accountability" by many young officers and soldiers who felt undercompensated for the additional work they contributed towards Sadhbhavna, a perception that thoroughly challenged Sadhbhavna's ideal of "civil-military" collaboration.

Just like some junior military officials, many in the civil administration treated Sadhbhavna as insignificant and even pointless. They rejected outright the military's grandiose vision to achieve development through half-hearted schemes that failed to take into account people's needs or aspirations. Although the BADP required the military to seek the government's approval before conceiving a project, no such collaboration existed in practice (Aggarwal and Bhan 2009). An angry and visibly upset government official commented on the military's disregard for civilian authority:

They are not the ones running the show, making a difference in people's lives. They are not happy with their vocation, so they wanted to infringe on other people's affairs. This applies more when Arjun Ray was at the helm. I think after Ray's premature retirement, they too understood their limits. It was because we had a meek Deputy Commissioner then who could not show them their place. The civil administration was not projected very well.

The officer's remarks about the army's flagrant disregard for civilian authority were clearly not limited to budgetary allocations. Indeed, he strongly felt that it was the Deputy Commissioner's "meekness" that had prevented him from showing Arjun Ray his rightful "place." Although this relationship had changed somewhat after Arjun Ray's departure from Ladakh, he still felt that the army refused to take the government into account before embarking on their civic action projects:

The military was supposed to build assets for the civilian administration, mostly in inaccessible areas of the district. Eventually, those assets were to be transferred to the civilian administration. But since the army never takes us into confidence, it is hard for us to takeover schools or medical centers that we did not consent to in the first place.

The rhetoric of civil-military collaboration did little to hide the precarious struggle of power and authority in Kargil. Political egos clashed to reveal that the

state was hardly the “locus of a higher rationality” (Hansen 2001: 249). It was instead riven with irreconcilable differences of opinions and ideologies that challenged its representation as a monolithic site of power (Gupta 1995; Hansen and Stepputat 2001). The quotidian comments of civil and military officers also show that the values of efficiency, morality, and usefulness were deeply contested. While the military’s development was “top-down,” the civil government’s was too “unfair and partisan.” It was amply clear that officials from the civil state and the military strategically deployed differing versions of “efficiency” and “morality” to legitimize their rightful claims to governance and nation-building.

However, the military’s claims to power were not limited to abstract values of “morality” and “righteousness” alone. Their monopoly on matters of defense and national security firmly secured the military’s easy access to the region’s resources, a control that the civil administration could barely question. Civil–military relations in Kargil reached an impasse over the control of local resources and infrastructure and, as the next section will argue, the military’s rhetoric of development and humanitarianism did little to hide the violent landscapes of wars and plunder in Kargil.

Militarism and state land

The adverse impact of wars and war preparedness initiatives on the state of India’s social and economic development has received scant attention, especially in the fields of development economics, development studies, and psychology (Mathur 2001: 1). The political economy of militarism is systematically excluded from hegemonic frames of analyses that claim to engage with questions of social and economic inequity in India. Hence, policy debates on poverty and underdevelopment hardly ever invoke India’s expanding defense capabilities. Militarism becomes the proverbial elephant in the room that is rarely mentioned and yet continues to haunt India’s potential to achieve equitable growth and development.

Such omissions are exacerbated by India’s energized counterinsurgency apparatus with its “remarkable tolerance for repressive police and military action” (ibid.: 3), especially in border regions where multiple agitations for autonomy, statehood, or independence are viewed as threats to India’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. In order to counter such threats, the postcolonial Indian military has become an “instrument of domestic repression” (Kazi 2010: 15). Its expanded role in post-Independence India—which included waging a war against its recalcitrant citizens as much as it included the defense of the country against external aggression—justified an excessive budgetary allocation to defense-related activities. Although defense analysts argue that only a small portion of India’s overall budget is allocated to the country’s defense needs, such allocations still exceed the government’s budget for social and welfare programs.⁶ For instance, according to a recent statistic, while 2 percent of India’s budget is for defense, only 0.34 percent of the budget goes to family planning and 0.73 percent is allocated to education (Bhowmick 2012). In 2011 alone, India increased its

annual defense spending to US\$36 billion in order to modernize its weapons, counter domestic insurgencies, as well as prepare for potential threats from China and Pakistan (Qureshi 2011).

In addition to building its combat capabilities, the military has occupied vast portions of land and other resources to establish its command centers, establish forward military bases, construct roads and infrastructure, and build schools and defense facilities across India. As Samaddar argues: “like any other estate in the nation,” the military “has its own universe—laws, schools, medical services, food canteens, telecommunications arrangements, recreational facilities, sports, adventure, houses, townships, engineers, technocrats, scientists (name anything, the army has its own system), a total world” (1995: 6).

The massive spatial reconfiguration required to create the military’s “total world,” however, is hardly just technical; it is instead an ideological “strategy to control what people can [or cannot] do inside national borders” (Vandergeest and Peluso 1995) and to impose spatial forms of militarized control over indeterminate geographies. Such processes of “internal territorialization” (ibid.) are markedly brought to the forefront in Jammu and Kashmir where alongside decades of brutal violence, the military has established bunkers, bases, and checkpoints to claim landscapes, mountains, passes, rivers, and glaciers that defy clear lines of territorial and national demarcations.

The Valley of Kashmir has often been treated as the “most coveted [piece of] real-estate,” a beautiful and strategic territory that needed to be protected against its own people (Bose 2003: 181; Rai 2004). After the popular movement for *aazadi* or independence in the late 1980s, the Indian army occupied vast tracts of civilian-owned and state-owned land to strengthen its presence in the Valley. Unlike representational strategies that eulogize the Kashmiri landscape, transforming it into what Ananya Jahanara Kabir (2009) calls a “territory of desire,” Ladakh is most frequently depicted as a “hazard-filled wilderness” to be conquered and defeated (Aggarwal 2004: 9). Much in sync with earlier colonial accounts in which Kashmir was highly prized for its natural beauty and luscious landscapes, while Ladakh was represented as “stark and bare, devoid of sweet and soft nature” (ibid.: 110), military writings, too, are relentless in their depictions of Ladakh as deadly and dangerous. According to Acosta, a naval school postgraduate:

The combination of thin air, cold weather and rugged mountains has dramatic effects on men and their equipment. Reduced oxygen leads to a variety of physiological changes and illnesses, some of which can prove fatal. Low air pressure alters the accuracy and range of both weaponry and aircraft. Cold weather incapacitates soldiers and degrades equipment. Mountainous terrain makes all aspects of warfare more difficult. Steep gradients make movement slow and hazardous. High peaks and ridgelines expose men to the elements as well as plunging and often unseen enemy fire. These characteristics create an unforgiving battlefield, in which the environment can prove as deadly as the enemy.

(2003: 1)

Characterized predominantly as an “unforgiving battlefield” that could potentially devour its own soldiers, Ladakh in this passage is likened to the “deadly enemy” that is cruel and ruthless. Rather than offer protection to the soldiers, the rugged “peaks and ridgelines” thwart their capabilities to fight the enemy effectively. Furthermore, the “combination of thin air, cold weather and rugged mountains” incapacitates soldiers and can even prove fatal.

However, such “threats” have not deterred the military from staking claims to Ladakhi territory. Arguably, the strategic benefits of the Ladakhi landscape far outweigh the perceived risks to the health and vitality of the armed forces. This is most clearly evidenced in the proportion of land occupied by the military in Ladakh. According to a conservative estimate, while 35 percent of the land occupied by the army was in Jammu and an estimated 11 percent in Kashmir, almost 46 percent of it was located in Ladakh.⁷ For instance, according to a local councillor, until 2009, in Kargil alone, at least 113,000 *kanals*⁸ of land were under the military’s occupation, of which 2,200 *kanals* were in Khumbathang, while 3,450 *kanals* were in the Khurbathang plateau, a prized piece of real estate in Kargil and the most desired location for the new township. Most civil officials attributed the continued state of “underdevelopment” and “backwardness” in Kargil to the lackluster town that offered fewer avenues to international or domestic tourists who treated it as a halting place on their onward journey to Leh. Hassan Khan, the MP from Ladakh, forcefully claimed that the army needed to “stem its land-grabbing tendencies” in order to help create opportunities for people’s development and long-term well-being:

If you look at Kargil town, it almost seems like it is going to explode with people. A tiny strip of a town cannot be used to efficiently manage a growing population and its aspirations. So, the army needs to stem its land-grabbing tendencies and occupy land that they really require.

The military occupied vast tracts of land in Kargil even before the war in 1999. According to one official estimate, a total of 7,276 *kanals* of land were under the military’s control, although many local administrators contested this figure claiming that at least 113,000 *kanals* of land were under the military’s unauthorized occupation before 1999 (see Table 5.2).

The primary area of contestation was Khurbathang, a prized piece of real estate in the vicinity of Kargil town, which was occupied by the military in 1962 during the India–China war. The government had been persistent in their demands to reclaim the Khurbathang area so the township could be expanded to accommodate a growing population and build Kargil’s infrastructure for domestic and international tourism.

Despite the military’s promise to relocate, the war of 1999 and the possibilities of future attacks by China and Pakistan further solidified the military’s control over Khurbathang. Soon after the Kargil war, a massive firing range was constructed in the proximity of the town for weapons testing. Initially set up to test smaller weapons, the military ended up testing the bigger Bofors guns that,

Table 5.2 Details of unauthorized occupation of state land by the army in Tehsil Kargil

<i>Sr. no</i>	<i>Name of the village/location</i>	<i>Kanals</i>	<i>Marlas</i>	<i>Year of occupation</i>
1	Gumri	121	18	1992
2	Matayen	168	0	1999
3	Pand rass (Mirkhan thang)	360	9	1999
4	Lokthang (Command)	217	17	1999
5	Goshan	111	16	
6	Thasgam	72	11	1999
7	Sumat thang	183	7	1999
8	Kaksar Kdothang	644	12	
9	Kaksar R.P. Gat/Painces	08	6	
10	Lattoo	03	1	
11	Choli skambo (Chanigund)			
	(i) Kharul Thang	12	10	1947
	(ii) Kharul (Chanigund)	83	7	1996
	(iii) Kharul Bridge	57	0	1947
	(iv) BN Store	16	7	1999
12	Poyen (Gilmothang)	98	14	1998
13	Yourbaltak	139	19	1997
14	Apati	175	13	1997
15	Khurbathang	3,959	6	1962
16	Silmo	36	2	N/A
17	Chulichen	20	0	1999
18	Bodhkharboo	786	0	1998
	Grand Total	7,276	15	

J&K government, 2009

according to Hassan Khan, “wreaked havoc on civilian populations.” The firing range was used as a national training ground for the Indian army that transformed Kargil into a garrison town ready to serve the expanding needs of defense and national security. In the letter addressed to Hamid Ansari, the Vice President of India, the civil administration requested that the firing range be relocated on human and environmental grounds:

There is strong resentment among the people for not shifting the present artillery firing range from Khurbathang Plateau. In the initial stages the army used small weaponry for firing practice within a limited area. But after the 1999 Kargil conflict, the army authorities have increased their quantum and are also using heavy artillery such as Bofors guns.

This has already started causing damage to nearby properties due to high vibrations. The noise and air pollution also has started increasing in the area. Cracks have started appearing in some buildings nearby. It has also become a

cause of environmental concern. The precious vegetation, including herbal and medicinal plants, have seriously been affected. Their growth has become retarded and is almost facing imminent extinction, if this is not halted immediately. This firing practice range, interestingly, also is located next to the Brakoo Wildlife Sanctuary, whose inmates are also getting affected very seriously. It will not be out of place to mention that the unexploded shells have been the cause of death of many men and grazing animals in the area. Due to the continuous firing, the men in the adjacent villages such as Pushkum, Skambo, Choskore, Ackchamal, and few others are not able to take their cattle for grazing in the hill slopes. Their livelihood has been badly affected and [people are] undergoing great miseries.

Incidentally, the firing range is very close to the Kargil town within a radius of 1 km. There is no such precedence anywhere in the country where a heavy artillery firing range is close to a township and populated dwellings.

The letter stated that the firing range was located less than a kilometer away from the township in Kargil, a decision that had substantially damaged Kargil's civilian populations as well as destroying its flora and fauna. "Continuous firing" had made it impossible for villagers to sustain their livelihoods while unexploded shells had killed several men and cattle. I was also told that weapons testing happened unannounced, even Bofors shells were exploded frequently, because of which "tourists were too scared" to stay in Kargil. In addition, the field firing range used up at least one lakh *kanal* of land in a wildlife sanctuary. "Of course, our wildlife is as important to us as our people, so we are asking the army to vacate the plateau," said an important civil official. In another letter written in 2009 by the civil administration to Hamid Ansari, the issue of Khurbathang featured prominently:

Kargil, [a very] small district, has [an] acute [shortage of] available land area, [which] constrains [its] overall infrastructural development and other civilian population's needs. Khurbathang Area was earlier fully occupied by the defense establishment that had its full complement of dwellings and other facilities at Khurbathang Plateau. It was agreed earlier that [this area would be returned] to the local Civil Administration after [the Defense establishment accepted] the Sanctioned and Allocated Compensation of Rs. 50.00 Lakhs. Even though many years have now passed since the end of the Kargil war, this has not been done. In fact surprisingly, the defense establishment has retracted from their agreement and refused to hand over the area to the civil administration.

Restoring the Khurbathang Plateau to the Kargil Administration has been one of the vehement demands of the people of Kargil. With peace having returned to the area, the Civil Administration is in urgency to ensure return of normal life and habitation [and] boost [people's] morale and imbibe [in them] a sense of safety and security.

The letter pointed to the “acute” shortage of available land in Kargil, a situation made dire by the military’s occupation of the Khurbathang plateau. While the military had been willing to relocate in exchange for a compensatory amount of US\$100,000, leaders in the opposition blamed Kargil’s weak bureaucracy and political leadership for failing to acquire the plateau from the military on time. According to Asgar Ali Karbalai:

It was a good deal to acquire the land even if it meant paying the military what they demanded at the time. The government could even have earned a profit by auctioning off the military’s standing structures. Unfortunately, the DC did not aggressively push the demand and the ruling party was barely interested in Khurbathang at the time.

By 2009, the civil administration was eager to return to normalcy and “imbibe in Kargilis a sense of safety and security” for which they needed to demilitarize Khurbathang.

The politics over the differential control over Kargil’s resources was not limited to land alone. In a region that remains cut off from India for six months a year, two long-standing demands of Kargilis were an all-weather tunnel on the Zojila Pass to connect Srinagar with Ladakh and a local airport for commercial flights. Several administrators and politicians resented the BRO’s total control over the Srinagar–Ladakh highway. According to Nasir Munshi, a Councillor and member of the opposition:

The BRO guys fooled us for the longest time by posting signs along the Srinagar–Ladakh highway calling it a “national highway” when in fact, the Srinagar–Ladakh stretch had all along been just a GS [General Supplies] road, meant predominantly to ease the transport of military supplies.

Also, the BRO kept the highway off-limits for at least six months, citing extreme weather conditions as the reason to curb the flow of civilian traffic. Besides, in the summer months, only one-way traffic on the highway was permitted, which meant long delays for commuters traveling between Srinagar and Ladakh. However, according to Karbalai:

In 2008, we hired local bulldozers to clear the snow in March, two months before the BRO opens the road for general thoroughfare. We showed the BRO that we didn’t need sophisticated machinery to clear up the Zojila, our lifeline. If we could clear the road in March, why couldn’t the BRO do it too?

After a series of intense negotiations, the civil administration convinced the Government of India to declare the GS road a National Highway (NH 1 Delta). While the BRO was still responsible for its general upkeep, the funding now came from the Ministry of Surface Transport instead of from the MoD. “The fact that the army was responsible for monitoring civilian traffic made no sense to us.

We therefore requested the central government to convert the GS road into a national highway under the National Highways Act of 1956.” Karbalai celebrated his move as a victory for Kargilis because it meant that more funds from the central ministry could now be devoted to maintain “Ladakh’s lifeline.” The civilian administration had successfully rallied for some measure of control in a context where resources were primarily used to fulfill the excessive demands of the military’s defense and security apparatus. Therefore, at stake in this victory was not just the easier movement of people between Srinagar and Kargil but also that it challenged, although only to a limited extent, the military’s total monopoly over the only highway that connected Kargil with the outside world.

Existing conflicts over the military’s untrammelled access to resources also extended to the local airport in Kargil, which opened for military use in 2003, although a few military flights carried civilian passengers between Kargil and Srinagar during winter when the highway was closed for traffic. The administration’s long-standing demand to allow commercial flights into the airport was repeatedly rejected by senior defense officials under the pretext that the Kargil airfield was only 6 miles from the international border. They argued that commercial flights needed a longer runway that would only make the airport a prime Pakistani target in the future. However, in 2011, the Indian Air Force decided to set up a full-fledged air force base in Kargil, a decision that was allegedly taken to counter China’s strategic constructions in Tibet. Amidst the widespread frenzy that hostile neighbors might attack Ladakh, the air force base is supposed to work as a “deterrent” to Chinese and Pakistani designs in the region. For several critics, however, “the extreme forward location of this base makes its strategic and operational values highly dubious” (Akhter 2012). Furthermore, many Kargilis feel that this move will make it impossible to live in the town after 2016 when the base is fully established and there are fighter jets operating on a daily basis. Kargilis have taken to several public outlets to express their resentment against this move. In a Facebook thread devoted to this topic, a Kargili notes:

What is great about it, they are turning Kargil into a battlefield. First, they are [not] concerned about the citizens of Kargil and their basic needs. They are more concerned about the Chinese influence . . . secondly where will our town be shifted if they took away all our land. Thirdly, they are turning our civilian airport into an army one. This will have a deteriorating effect on our economy and most importantly, our interests will be subordinated to the will of army. By the way, we are in a democratic country not under military rule.

The perception that Kargil has been turned into a “battlefield,” and that civilian interests are consistently “subordinated to the will of the army,” is widespread and feeds people’s anxieties about losing all their land and resources to the military.⁹ The assertion that Kargilis live in a “democratic country not under military rule” captures the tenuous boundaries between democracy and militarism in situations where urgencies of security trump concerns for social justice or equity.

For Kargilis, such anxieties were also shaped by perceptions that their civilian leadership was unwilling to fight for their rights. According to Yaqoob, a Kargili resident:

This is nothing more than the incompetency on the part of our leaders . . . previous chief Councillor leased the airport for 50 years just to get some goodwill from the army by killing the interest of [sic] whole district. Now the new CC is selling the entire thang area permanently. The day is not far when for the army's interest our incompetent leaders evacuate Kargil and settle us down us somewhere on Andaman and Nicobar islands.

The trend of leasing land to the army in order to earn their "goodwill" was what infuriated Yaqoob. He was worried that Kargilis might be banished to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, a popular and dreaded site known mostly for its infamous incarceration of Indian freedom fighters during British colonialism.

Notwithstanding their sporadic conflicts with the military over land and resources, no political party, as Yaqoob rightly mentioned, openly favored Kargil's demilitarization. While they recognized the constraints of an expanding militarism on the region's development, or the military's flagrant use of local resources, they were equally wary of supporting demilitarization that dominated the political discourse in Kashmir. Regardless of all its flaws, the military was considered integral to Kargil's defense, economy, and survival.

Therefore, unlike in Kashmir where calls for demilitarization had animated local politics for decades and questions of national security were vociferously questioned, Kargil witnessed an uncharacteristic accommodation with the logic of national security and militarism. In order to distance themselves ideologically from their Kashmiri counterparts, Kargilis rejected demilitarization as yet another way for Kashmiris to monopolize the future of the region under the garb of peace and diplomacy. Instead, all Kargili leaders wanted was the relocation of the military from prized areas such as Khurbathang to less-populated areas so Kargil could develop its tourism industry.

According to Hassan Khan, the current Member of Parliament from Ladakh:

Ladakhis have never harbored the feeling that the Indian army is an occupying force. Current discussions in Ladakh are about convincing the army to shift its bases to less populated areas, not demilitarizing the region. The army has always been helpful to the people of Ladakh. Our politics is very different from that of Kashmiris.

Kargil's political mainstream firmly subscribed to the military's "benevolent" image and dismissed discussions of demilitarization in Kashmir as parochial and self-centered. Instead of demanding a reduction of their operations or settlements in Kargil, the military was asked to relocate to areas farther from the town. Land between Fotu-la and Lamayuru, considered to be a "wasteland," was offered as a potential site for setting up alternative military bases. The fact that such areas

might hold profound economic and social significance for populations living in their proximity was conveniently overlooked. It was clear that the political leadership in Kargil was willing to contest the military's use of local resources only to the extent that such critiques did not convey an outright rejection of militarism or its associated ideologies of defense and national security.

Militarism and land alienation

While the military's occupation of Khurbathang or its takeover of the local airport were hotly debated issues in Kargil, the massive appropriation of land in remoter villagers of the district was hardly ever discussed. For instance, the official statistics (that I reproduced earlier) only accounted for state-owned land that was under the military's occupation even though vast portions of private land in Kargil's border villages had been taken over by the military in 1999, mostly to install artillery guns or to set up permanent military posts close to the villages or in highland pasturelands. The demarcations between illegally occupied land and that acquired "officially" under the Land Acquisition Act remained unclear because of murky official data. Privately owned land was thus an arena of everyday contestation between the villagers and the military.

Such contestations were apparent in Garkone, where the gradual transformation of Brogpa landscapes into a war zone had meant the obliteration of customary economies and land-use practices. The disruption of their socio-economic practices represented what Kuletz calls a "dramatic form of disembodiment" that marked the abrupt and violent "separation between self and nature" (1998: 7). Since a place is "inseparable from the consciousness of those who inhabit it," Brogpas, too, viewed their landscape as repositories of their religious beliefs, histories, and identities (Daniels 1985: 151). At once material and symbolic, their physical surroundings were a testimony to their tumultuous history of settlements in Ladakh as well as an affirmation of their distinct cultural identities (see Chapter 1). However, many Brogpas had been forced to sacrifice their land to accommodate the urgent needs of defense and security since the 1970s. Brogpas who had experienced the seasonal rhythms of moving back and forth between Garkone and their *nullahs* missed the intimacy with their landscape. According to Morup:

We had names for all the mountains that surround the village. If I was going with my livestock to one of the *nullahs*, my family needed to know where to find me in case there was a mishap. So we had names like *Tokasbar*, *Bonibar*, *Khakhos*, *Banju*, *Tharu*, *Bararu*, etc. Although the army retained some of our names, they mostly use numbers like 5000, 73, Bomb 1, Bomb 2, etc. to keep these locations a secret. For instance, the army occupied one of our *nullahs* called *saspopadong* in 1971 after which we were not allowed access to our land and shrines. In fact, the army personnel used to tell us how they spotted figures in white who would even talk to them. "Leave our homes alone," they would tell them. It must have happened three to four times, after which, the *lha* disappeared.

Morup recalled how Brogpas identified their mountains and landscapes using specific names, a practice that allowed them to herd their yaks and goats in familiar and intimate surroundings.¹⁰ Renaming Brogpa landscapes asserted the military's inviolable control over local spaces and "played a key role in constituting national territory" (Heyman 2010: 307). Local names such as *Tokasbar*, *Bonibar*, *Khakhos*, *Banju*, *Tharu*, *Bararu* that tied Brogpas to their material and sacred geographies were supplanted by numbers that the military used as cryptic codes to relay strategic information about their border locations.

Although *Ihas* had vehemently resisted the occupation of their land and abode, their eventual disappearance served as a metaphor for the increasing violation of their sacred landscapes as Brogpas became embroiled in the nationalist projects of defense and territoriality. Brogpa narratives of intimacy were supplanted by emotions of fear and disenfranchisement as perceived threats from Pakistan became pervasive and the Indian military occupied more land along the border. However, the increasing reliance of border populations on the military has meant a greater accommodation with the burdens of militarism and its attendant ideologies. For instance, with the reduction of cross-border shelling since 2003, the military, in conjunction with the department of J&K Tourism, has vigorously promoted warscapes as tourist sites, representing yet another layer of historic disenfranchisement for local communities (Aggarwal 2004: 226–229).

The Drass sector of Kargil district, which witnessed intense fighting between Indian and Pakistani forces in 1999, is emblematic of how new and intersecting geographies of militarism and neoliberalism cohere to incite desires of upward mobility and weaken pre-existing claims of land use and ownership. The military set up war memorials and other militarized memorabilia on private and community-owned land to embellish Kargil's violent geographies and promote aesthetized representations of warscapes for mass consumption. Adding a boost to domestic tourism in Kargil, such sites promoted the influx of Indians eager to experience the "authentic" war zone, where the harsh realities of the Kargil war were packaged as discreet and disembodied memories of fallen soldiers and valiant martyrs. Tourism complemented militarism even further as local landscapes were reworked to capitalize on India's fetish with the Kargil war. In conjunction with war sites, new religious sites that celebrated India's Hindu mythology—Dropti kund, a site named after the wife of the Pandavas, and Bhembat, a rock believed to be the body of Bhim, the Pandava warrior—transformed Kargil from a marginal hinterland into a dynamic witness to the pan-Indian Hinduized continuity (ibid.: 113). Hence, forces of militarism, neoliberalism, and religious nationalism worked in concert to foster land alienation and undermine users' rights such as grazing and agriculture, activities that were integral to people's everyday lives. Commenting on the intense militarization and commodification of their land, a resident from Drass noted:

In a way it is good that more Indian tourists are visiting Drass, we can communicate with them better. They come here to see Tololing, Tiger Hill, and Mushkoh, which were all prominent battle sites during the war. While we

earn a living through them, what worries us is our future. Such tourism is for the present, but what will happen to us in the future? I lost my entire land to the military during the war. Landmines and heavy shelling destroyed my livestock. The only compensation I receive from the military is 200 rupees [US\$10] per month.

Tourism had opened up sources of income and livelihood for many, at least in the short term. Several peaks where Indian soldiers battled Pakistani forces were household names throughout India and boosted the influx of domestic tourists to places like Drass and Kargil that hardly existed on the tourist circuit prior to the war. But villagers considered the influx of tourists to be temporary and worried about their future prospects for survival and livelihood. Many families in Drass, who lost vast tracts of land to the military and their livestock to intense shelling, demanded better compensations for their loss. The paltry rent of \$10 was not enough given rising inflation and the higher cost of living. Besides, many viewed the military as the only stable avenue for employment. Instead of demanding their relocation, villagers from Drass and Garkone wanted the military to offer better provisions for families who were severely affected by the military's land-grab policies:

We are hoping that the army could employ a member from a household whose land was forcibly occupied during the war. They can easily recruit them in the military, or employ them as porters. However, even for portering now, they have a lottery system in place, which does not provide need-based employment to the villagers.

Most villagers were deeply anxious about the temporary prospects of tourism and demanded "need-based" employment in the military. Instead, the military used a lottery system that arbitrarily selected porters from the village. People's desire for equitable participation and fairer access to the military ensured their continued subordination to the military's larger objectives. Consequently, what was articulated as resistance did not at all dislodge militarism or its attendant ideologies. On the contrary, such claim-making further emboldened the military and secured people's increasing reliance on the military's benevolence. The inability of the civil administration to generate substantial jobs or state revenue outside Kargil's militarized economy compelled villagers to work within the confines of militarism.

Furthermore, local communities were conscious of the restraints and limitations of overtly resisting the military's hegemony; any critique of the military had the potential to be read as anti-national or unpatriotic. Hence, ideologies of hyper-nationalism and militarism posed an insurmountable threat to the fragile democratic order, and shaped the contours and limits of democratic dissidence. In conjunction with a weakened civil apparatus and a society that relied overwhelmingly on the military, an ambiguous structure of governance also made it exceedingly difficult for people to stake their rightful claims to their land and resources or pursue their demands for temporary contractual jobs in the military.

Hybrid governance

The hybrid nature of everyday governance blurred the boundaries between the civil state and the military even further, diffusing notions of authority, accountability, and the rule of law. In order to uphold notions of civil supremacy and limit the role of the military in public life—integral characteristics of a vibrant democracy—the military often appointed civilian labor officers who were responsible for recruiting civilians for portering duties. Many Brogpas were often disgruntled with their labor officers. They complained how “the labor-officer tended to favor Nepali workers over Brogpas. We requested the military several times to give first priority to the villagers, but they don’t seem to agree.” Stories of corrupt labor officers who demanded huge sums of money to employ porters were all too common, and people resented immigrant Nepalis for willingly providing kickbacks and a ready pool of cheap and easy labor. The military hardly intervened, claiming that labor officers did not fall under the ambit of the military and were accountable to civil officials in Kargil. The hybrid form of governance in which civil officers were responsible for recruiting porters afforded the military a greater degree of impunity in the name of democracy and civil accountability.

Confounded by the complicated hierarchies of command, the villagers found it difficult to navigate thick layers of bureaucracy, made more impenetrable by the murky boundaries between the civil administration and the military. Dense bureaucracies and conflicting institutional cultures of the civil administration and the military also interfered with the delivery of justice in the context of land compensations. Local Councillors, who often championed the cause of land compensations on behalf of the villagers, felt deeply constrained by the inaccessibility of the military and its strict hierarchies of command and authority. In 2004, a series of meetings between local Councillors and the military were held to resolve the long-standing dispute over land compensations in Garkone and its adjoining villages. Most of these meetings were inconclusive: while the military blamed the civil administration for its tardiness, the military’s haughtiness and inaccessibility upset the Councillors, perpetuating their continued standoff. In one such meeting, held a month after the picnic in *parianda*, Dawa, the Hill Council representative for the Skurbuchen constituency in Leh, was scheduled to meet with the army commander in Dha. Despite his insistence that I accompany him, I decided not to participate in a closed-door meeting. Dawa prepared a list of issues as I drove him to the base camp of the military, a mile from Dha. For the 66 *kanals* of land occupied by the army in *Dha-brog* since 1999, the rent for five years had accumulated to lakhs of rupees, none of which had been paid to the villagers. While there was documentation available for *Dha-brog*, on the basis of which claims of compensation could be made, no papers for rent or compensation existed for Ganasok, where the military had occupied vast tracts of fertile land in 1999. As Dawa and the *nambardar* of Dha stepped into the brigade, I wished them luck and decided to meet with them later in the afternoon.

Not long afterwards, I saw Dawa and the *nambardar* in the village, exasperated with the military commander. They had expected to be served lunch in an elaborate

“military style,” as Dawa phrased it. However, the meeting had been “inconclusive” and the commander “rude.” Dawa assembled the villagers to discuss the proceedings of his meeting: as for the land in *Dha-brog*, the army had alleged that the civil officers had not prepared the right documentation and there was a “goof-up” regarding *khasra* and *shajra* (numbers and figures), while the land occupied in Ganasok had not been measured yet. Furthermore, the commander had denied giving up the occupied land in *Dha-brog*, an ideal location for constructing the *Dha-thang* hydroelectric project that could potentially resolve the water crisis in Dha and Garkone. The commander’s refusal to speak with Dawa regarding the hydroelectric project was “deeply insulting,” Dawa confessed. His persistence had irked the commander and he was asked to behave in a more “mature” way:

The commander was trying to use battleground tactics with me . . . trying to berate me psychologically. He told me that I was a Councillor and should behave like one . . . more maturely. Shouting won’t help. May be you can lecture the villagers like this but not me. He kept telling me that he would look into the matter himself. I told him, if that is what you intended to do, you should have done it long time ago. Why did he have to call this meeting?

Far from viewing it as a deliberative dialogue, Dawa interpreted the meeting as a power play in which the commander used “battleground tactics” to silence and bully him. Using “tactics” to “berate” him “psychologically,” the commander’s tone, Dawa claimed, was unapologetic and condescending. The commander’s rebuttal that “he would look into the matter himself” showed his reluctance to negotiate with an impudent Councillor who did not respect the implicit hierarchies of power and status.

Unlikely to align with democratic principles of accountability and social justice, the military’s strict chain of command can undermine its capacity for dialogue and deliberative decision-making. Especially because the military enjoyed unfettered impunity in Kargil and claimed a higher moral ground to protect India’s integrity, there was little room for debate or deliberation. In comparison to the civil administration whose job was only peripherally linked to the exalted domain of national security, the military commander infantilized Dawa and dismissed his claims as insignificant or even perfunctory. People’s compensations could wait because they did not merit the urgent attention that questions of defense and security demanded.

Like Dawa, many other Councillors and civil officers felt that they were often “mistreated” by the military, although on formal occasions the army invited them for lavish dinners in the spirit of maintaining cordial civil military relations. However, everyday conflicts were routine, especially when the military denied politicians or civil officers entry into border villages, all under the guise of defense and protection. For instance, in 2003, a soldier prevented the Superintendent of Police (SP, the highest police authority in the district) and a state minister from visiting a border village that fell under the SP’s jurisdiction. The politician was visiting from Kashmir and was told by a *sipahi* (soldier) that he could not enter the village because of anticipated shelling from Pakistan. The SP who was

narrating this event told me “that he was too offended by this incident but felt terribly helpless.”

Discourses of protection” and “national security” were inherently paternalistic. They carved up geographies of access and confinement and limited people’s mobilities for work, labor, and sociality. Such quotidian events also established the supremacy of the military in Kargil, forcing the civil administration to comply with measures that were infantilizing or downright offensive. With no provision in the Indian Constitution that allowed the army to set up checkpoints in civilian areas unless in the context of wars or emergencies, the everyday refutation of law represented a permanent state of exception that was resisted, and yet tolerated in the name of defense and national security. The SP, whom I interviewed a fortnight after this incident had occurred, expressed this conundrum: “See, the military by themselves cannot establish checkpoints without consulting civilian authorities. However, because it is a border area and civil offices lack manpower and infrastructural facilities, the job of manning civilian areas goes to the army.”

Clearly then, the military’s heavy deployment on the border—the exercise of “manning” the border, in particular—was experienced as an inherently demasculinizing process by the civil administration. Unable to fully participate in the security infrastructure of the region, civilian officers and administrators felt victimized (and emasculated) by it. The routinized misdemeanor of soldiers on army checkpoints generated a series of First Information Reports (FIRs), verbal complaints, and official letters, bringing to the fore the subtleties and scope of the military’s powers in Kargil’s fragile democracy. Here I reproduce one such letter to analyze how, despite his attempt to demand more accountability from the military, a district Councillor failed to question the underlying logic of militarism that permitted such transgressions of law in the first place.

LADAKH AUTONOMOUS HILL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR (WORKS & POWER)
K A R G I L

Lt.Gen. xxxxxxx, AVSM,VrC,SC,VSM
Corps. Commander,
14 Corps. C/O 56 APO

NO: LAHDC-K/EC/W&P/rep-2007, Dated: October 1st, 2007.

Subject: Misbehavior by gentlemen of a highly disciplined force.

Respected Sir,

Kindly take a note of the following points that I am raising earnestly with the confidence of prompt action.

1. That I was on an official tour towards Kaksar village along with my PSO and driver today on 1st October 2007, it was so humiliating to note that

- the officer from the highly disciplined force using unparliamentary communications like street urchins stopped my jeep with the National flag on it and ordered my driver to disembark from the jeep and thrashed him with the butt of a service rifle that he snatched from his nearby Jawan. I and my PSO are witnesses to this shameful act of a highly disciplined force.
2. When I objected to this thrashing and provided my introduction in a gentleman's way, I was responded to rudely by Maj. xxx and Lt. xxx of the xxx regiment deployed in Kaksar sector that, "We don't have any business with the blady (bloody, *sic*) civilians," I further objected, "Don't you have respect for the National flag that is on my jeep?," note the ridiculous answer: "Even the militants are using the National flags for selfish ends," and quoted the example of militants attacking the Union Parliament with the National flag on their vehicle.
 3. That I being a public representative having the status of Deputy Minister was put [through] severe harassment for nearly one and a half hour restricting my movements. These two officers put me in confinement for one and a half hours. Whereas it is surprising to know that there [is a] plethora of Nepali porters working at the Army posts. I wonder how they reached these posts? How they are engaged? Who does the legal verification of their character and antecedents? Of late, Nepal has become a hub for the militants from across the border.
 4. Copy of the FIR lodged by the driver is enclosed with this representation for kind perusal.

The Councillor was upset at what he claimed to be the use of "unparliamentary" language by soldiers who treated him like a "street urchin" on his "official tour" to Kaksar village. Not only did the soldiers disregard his ministerial status, but they also disrespected the national flag that adorned the Councillor's jeep, a privilege reserved only for ministers and top bureaucratic officials in India. Junior military officers who claimed that it was not their business to deal with "bloody civilians" also beat the Councillor's driver. They compared the Councillor to "militants" who had used the national flag to gain entry into the Indian Parliament and blow it up. The Councillor was detained for a couple of hours and his trip to Kaksar was canceled. Deeply angered by this incident, the Councillor complained to top military officials but nothing came of it. He posed serious questions about the military's arbitrary use of power, forcing senior military officials to account for the overwhelming presence of Nepali nationals, most of whom were unauthorized to live in border villages. Such complaints were routine but hardly ever addressed by military officials who enjoyed continued impunity despite violating people's freedoms of movement and mobility.

It is clear that state officials and civilians deeply resented the military's overwhelming authority on the borders, even when it was couched as "protection." Frequent checkpoints, entry forbidden, restrictions on travel along the LoC after sunset, and other stringent regulations represented patterns of exclusions and inclusions under regimes of fear and security. The physical barricading of space

functioned more than a filter to regulate the flow of people; it symbolized the naked power of the military to demarcate boundaries of mobility and transgression.

Conclusion

This chapter documented and analyzed the ways in which democratic governance in Kargil was deeply constrained by the urgencies of wars, defense, and national security. Rather than focus on formal institutions of democracy, however, I focused on moments, events, and everyday conflicts to show that democracies are fragile, even perfunctory, if they privilege the expanding needs of a security state. In Kargil, where the Indian military exerted its decisive (although not undisputed) control over the region's land, labor, and resources, the boundaries between democracy and militarism were hardly secure. Indeed, agendas of democracy and social justice were trumped by the rapacious demands of the Indian military, which profoundly extended its presence in the region following the war of 1999.

And, this is despite the fact that India has not witnessed any *coups d'états* that have unequivocally challenged the supremacy of its democratic governance. However, institutions of democracy are weakened in Kargil by the military's unwarranted claims to land and resources; discourses of professionalism and efficiency that legitimize the army's extended role in public life; and, most importantly, by the inability of the government to challenge the goals of defense and national security that are foundational to Kargil's political economy. Since India's independence, the role of the Indian military in civilian affairs has consistently increased—from curbing popular movements under the pretext of battling terrorism to providing vital labor and resources during natural disasters, the military has been called upon to “aid the civilian government,” a role that was further reinforced in post-war Kargil through the military's humanitarian efforts such as Sadhbhavna. However, as many have argued, any effort to “democratize” or “humanize” the military is fraught with the possibility of abetting and reinforcing militarism (Aggarwal and Bhan 2009; Enloe 2000). Or as Fassin and Vasquez (2005) contend, military's humanitarianism can foster a new state of exception in which compassion and human life provide justifications for the suspension of civil liberties and the rule of law.

Sadhbhavna, I argued, encouraged a culture of entitlement as well as impunity in the military. The military occupied vast swaths of land for their defense installations, sometimes without adequately compensating people with money or jobs. National security and militarism competed with the substantive development of the region as the military exerted its control over state and community-owned land and resources. Even Kargil's highways, skies, and mountains were under the strict control of the military. The civil administration and political elites, while critical of the military's “land-grabbing tendencies,” remained in concert with the objectives of defense and national security.

With the local economy so reliant on the military, talks of demilitarization had a different resonance for Kargilis, who hardly equated it with peace, security and stability. Instead, prospects of unemployment and economic insecurity

loomed large and the military was increasingly seen as a guarantor of people's employment and livelihood opportunities. The inability to envision an alternative future signaled the failure of democratic governance as well as the fate of a warring nation that had fostered acute dependence of Kargilis on the institutions and ideologies of war making.

Indeed, the failure of the postcolonial state to deliver on its promises of social welfare and progress, coupled with its regional imbalances vis-à-vis Leh and Kashmir, compelled Kargilis to view the military as a benefactor, even when they recognized its dramatic human, social, political, and environmental costs. To obscure the profound disparities of power, however, the military framed its relationships with the community as 'symbiotic'—a term that downplayed the conviviality between militarization and economic disenfranchisement by portraying fundamentally exploitative relations as equal and non-coercive. Ironically, thus, the military was considered to boost prospects of local employment, when in fact, it thrived on social and economic marginalities to ensure its institutional longevity. Contrary to popular wisdom, Kargil's extensive defense apparatus substantively eroded people's livelihood security. It ensured that Kargil became a defense experiment for the military's war preparedness initiatives, so values of human security, compassion, and justice became subservient to, and even enabled, the consolidation of a security state.

6 Conclusion

Three months into my fieldwork in 2003, an entourage of ministers, member secretaries, and bureaucrats from Delhi and Kargil, arrived in Garkone to congratulate Brogpas for playing an integral part in securing India's frontiers during the Kargil war. Amidst great fanfare and a flurry of introductory speeches, the member secretary from the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, wearing the characteristic Brogpa *kho* (headdress) and standing on the makeshift podium in front of at least 50–60 Brogpa men and women, prepared to deliver his congratulatory speech. Gazing at the massive stretch of mountains that surround the village, the secretary thanked Brogpas for demonstrating utmost *rashtra prem* (love for the nation) and for protecting Bharat Mata's honor at a critical moment in its history. For him, their sentiment of *wafadari* (loyalty) was particularly noteworthy because Brogpas lived in the *pahaads* (mountains) in such "harsh and inhospitable conditions," without access to electricity, water, health care facilities, and quality education. After acknowledging their indomitable spirit to withstand the rigors of life on the India–Pakistan border, the secretary promised to improve their "condition" in the coming years. "You have shown us your culture and dance, your faithfulness and resolve, we promise you that *adivasis* will develop (*adivasis ka vikas hoga*)." Laced with affective imageries of hope, compassion, and healing, the minister finally concluded: "we came here to bring joy to your faces and to make sure we didn't just gather statistics from Kashmir or Delhi. We came all the way to see your faces light up with the promise of progressive change and transformation."

This was one of the many official visits by ministers, military officials, and bureaucrats in the post-war period when Brogpas were promised the "good life" through concerted improvements in public services, health care, and education. Indeed, Brogpas were deluged by state-backed assertions of care and compassion, assertions that were profoundly shaped by their remote yet highly strategic location on the *pahaads*—mountains that form the jagged contours of the LoC between India and Pakistan.

"Living on the LoC," as many have suggested, is to bear witness to the hostilities between India and Pakistan; to experience unwarranted deaths, torture, and displacements; and to embody the violence of state and non-state terror that cripples normal life in India's border districts and enforces what many, following Agamben, have argued is a state of exception on India's frontiers

(Duschinski 2010; Jamwal and Suchismita 2011: 75). For Agamben, a state of exception is a state where “law encompasses living beings by means of its own suspension” producing “legally unnamable and unclassifiable” people who are completely “removed from law and from juridical oversight” (2005: 3, 4). In many parts of Jammu and Kashmir, where basic human rights are suspended in the state’s counterinsurgency war against insurgent citizens, the state of exception is instituted through what a recent Amnesty International report (2011) calls “lawless laws.”¹ Meant to detain suspects illegally or “keep them out of circulation” through prolonged incarceration, laws like the AFPSA, PSA, POTA, and TADA have provided the military blanket powers to enforce its draconian powers over human life.² For instance, according to the Amnesty International report, the number of people in “administrative detention without trial in J&K is 14 times higher than the national average.”³ The “informalization of everyday violence” (Duschinski 2010) takes place through “fake encounters” (*ibid.*), or through the “punitive containment” of populations portrayed as “threats to [the] national order” (Duschinski 2009: 692). Thus, a state of exception is driven predominantly by its modality to inflict violence and render a hyper-securitized state impermeable to a sustained critique or analysis.

Yet I explore in this book how tropes of healing, development and heart warfare, rather than explicit strategies of violence, death, and torture, enable the Indian state to extend and strengthen its security and military apparatus as well as exert its indubitable hegemony over local bodies and landscapes. “That a state of [exception] can be pronounced in the name of humanitarian considerations is perhaps essentially the manifestation of a profound truth of the contemporary world,” Fassin and Vasquez argue (2005: 391). Indeed, in their view, contemporary political life has exceeded normative characteristics of the state of exception. Historically founded on the consolidation of ultimate sovereignty and a complete abrogation of the rule of law, contemporary states of exception, do not [always] abolish laws (*ibid.*: 391). There is, however, a substantial curtailment or “undermining” of certain rights but it is not always in the name of a threat to public security (*ibid.*). Instead, contemporary states of exception are [also] established in the “name of emotion” or compassion generated for the human condition in situations of disasters, calamities, or wars (*ibid.*).

Ladakh was not involved in an active anti-India insurgency and was therefore the only province in J&K where AFPSA or other draconian laws were not implemented. Yet the state remained deeply vested in monitoring and regulating “people’s subversive interiorities” that allegedly posed inchoate, albeit potential, threats to the national-social order (Lutz 1997: 159). So when the Secretary (quoted above) congratulated Brogpas for their critical contributions to India’s border security, especially during the Kargil war, he affirmed what were fundamentally (despite the rhetoric of patriotism and loyalty) relationships of mistrust, disaffection, and skepticism. That Brogpa “love” and “loyalty” for India might not last if the state failed to offer them opportunities for substantive progress and development was clearly what concerned the Member Secretary. Underlying the Secretary’s speech was the critical need to ensure people’s continued cooperation

with the state's security and counterinsurgency apparatus, a promise that no amount of force or coercion could ensure.

The book has argued that it was precisely the construction of border communities as "inchoate" citizens that has shaped much of post-war development policy in Kargil. And, yet, alongside such constructions of Brogpas (and more generally Kargilis) as "untrustworthy" and potentially seditious, border communities were also portrayed as exhausted victims of relentless cross-border wars between India and Pakistan. For instance, commenting on the "pitiable" conditions of border villages, a journalist notes:

One consequence of this insecure atmosphere is that no one is willing to invest in any business or industry around those areas. Even government officials treat these villages with great disdain. Consequently, life for the people in such areas is truly harsh. It was only after the national and international press descended on these god-forsaken villages to report on the ongoing war that we were able to comprehend how woeful are the living conditions in these areas.⁴

That border populations were largely hidden from the public eye until the media exposed their "woeful condition" was a common sentiment in the post-war period as the flurry of writings on Kargil suggest. Border populations were represented as "victims" of prolonged wars, communities who lived in terribly "harsh and insecure" conditions. Behind such strong sentiments was also the belief that "strong nations were built" only if populations could rely on their "states to rescue them in time of crisis or calamities, be it war or floods."⁵

Widespread moral sentiments about "ameliorating people's suffering" were not limited to the Indian media but also drove state and military action in the post-war period (Fassin and Vasquez 2005: 397). Indeed, its claims to rescue and heal populations enabled the military to combine its "heart warfare" with Mufti Sayeed's post-war promise of participatory development, democracy, and welfare. And, yet, it was precisely its claims to heal hearts through care and compassion that normalized the military's sweeping powers in Kargil and secured its image as a partner rather than a threat to the region's social and economic development. Fassin and Vasquez claim that the natural disaster in Venezuela became the pretext for declaring a "state of emergency" in which tropes of care and compassion could hardly contain the violence "at the heart of the exception" (2005: 399). While my focus in the book was not on incidents of explicit violence, I use Fassin and Vasquez's conceptualization of "exception" as a lens to understand the state of permanent war in Kargil, established through the military's flagrant domination of land and resources and their access to people's hearts, minds, and bodies.

In the largest democracy of the world, where institutions of development and nation-building have reached the farthest frontiers and claim to incorporate the most marginal and culturally diverse communities into the national fold, the reinvention of the military as "armed humanitarians" seems puzzling. Two very divergent scenarios are often used to explain this phenomenon in the Indian

context. The first explanation (the one that the military also emphasizes) is to critically rethink the role that militaries can play in nation-building in a country with no history of *coups d'états* against civilian governments. In other words, by contributing to—although not entirely taking over—tasks of civilian welfare and development, the Indian military, many argue, is finally shedding its colonial image and contributing to national imperatives of economic progress and democracy. For scholars who espouse this view, even the Indian military cannot function with impunity in a context where the dominant political narrative is that of democracy and the rule of law.

However, assertions about the health of Indian democracy are belied by decades of violence in Kashmir and other border regions where, as stated before, a permanent state of emergency has eroded basic human rights and robbed people of life and liberty. Therefore, in order to explain the growing presence of the military in public life, I turned to a more radical stance toward the nature and scope of democratic governance on India's frontiers.

I argued that Kargil's post-war experiments with democracy failed to offer a robust alternative to the military's hegemony in the region. Despite its investments in democracy and development, the Hill Council could barely escape the burdens of the prolonged territorial dispute between India and Pakistan or the effects of years of conflict and unrest in J&K that, implicitly or explicitly, continue to shape the Indian government's policy interventions in Ladakh.

The Hill Council promised to extend the state's healing touch to post-war Kargil through participatory development and democracy, a move meant to enhance the stakes of remote, frontier populations in national visions of progress and modernity. Based on colonial modes of governmentality that sanctioned greater political and cultural autonomy for India's tribal-frontier regions so that "primitive" communities could be protected from "technologically advanced settler populations," Hill Councils enforced the colonial belief that tribal frontier populations were not yet "ready for the rigors of citizenship" (Barbora 2006: 3806). Yet images of backwardness and isolation were not just threats to dominant social, economic, or cultural orders. The inability of border populations to internalize modern politics of territoriality and sovereignty was construed as a political threat.

Mufti Sayeed's "healing touch policy" that extended the Hill Council to post-war Kargil illustrates precisely the ways tropes of backwardness, marginality, and alienation were envisioned as potential sources of political unrest or instability.⁶ The Hill Council was meant to "transform" India's dangerous hinterlands into models of peace, stability, and national integration. In other words, the Hill Council, as van Beek's work also demonstrates (1999), was meant to contain political dissent by fostering citizen subjectivities that aligned firmly with the state's sovereign and territorial orders. For instance, Mufti's elected government in 2002 categorically declared the need to shift attention away "from autonomy for the state of Jammu and Kashmir to questions of regional autonomy and internal devolution, a strategy to quell demands for UT status in Ladakh and *aazadi* or freedom in Kashmir."⁷ Much like the situation in northeast India, where

“counterinsurgency imperatives” to politically contain “undisciplined tribals” and “backward indigenes” have remained at the heart of the state’s decentralization initiatives, in Kargil, too, the Hill Council was a strategy to extend the state’s control over unregulated bodies and landscapes (McDuie-Ra 2009: 256).

A democracy where the state feels the consistent need to monitor and surveil populations it considers insufficiently socialized into the domains of law, citizenship, and civilization can never truly renounce its preoccupations with national security and with the inner workings of people’s “hearts” and “minds.” Rather than indicate a strong or vibrant democracy on India’s border, a claim the Indian state staunchly upholds, the Hill Council was fundamentally shaped by the state’s territorial logics of political containment and national sovereignty. To an extent, then, the military’s pervasive influence in Kargil reflects Indian democracy’s uncritical compliance with the imperatives of defense and counterinsurgency, especially on the borders where “dangerous” and “suspect” loyalties pose a persistent threat to India’s vision of unity and territorial integrity.

However, the Hill Council was not the only post-war instrument to foster national consciousness or strengthen people’s amorphous loyalties towards India. Two years before the Council was formed in Kargil, the Indian army, too, had woken up to its potential to “change hearts” and cure an alienated body politic through development and social welfare. The Indian military’s rhetoric of “healing” and its goals to extend its conventional operations from defense to development must be understood against the backdrop of two distinct, yet concurrent, global trends in the post-Cold War period: (1) the rethinking of the security doctrine; and (2) the emergence of counterinsurgency as the predominant mode of warfare. The emergence of human security as an alternative to traditional questions of defense and territoriality has allowed militaries to justify their interventions in the name of development, disaster relief, and humanitarianism. The Indian military, too, seamlessly merged this new emphasis on “healing” hearts with its post-war imperative to secure India’s boundaries from enemy incursions.

Operation Sadhbhavna and the Hill Council therefore bore striking similarities. They both used tropes of healing, recovery, and “heart warfare” to align border communities with the agendas of national security and integration and secure their loyalties in the post-war period. They both operated on the premise that increased opportunities for development could counter any potential unrest or radicalization in Kargil where regional animosities with Leh and Kashmir had created a profound sense of disenfranchisement and alienation.

But to focus overwhelmingly on their larger ideological and institutional agendas is to ignore the crucial differences in the ways their divergent, although not entirely discordant, pursuits of healing and development played out in practice and shaped citizen identities and political subjectivities. The pursuits of healing and development, I argued, are not just ideological tools to discipline citizens. Instead, they are potent registers through which claims to inclusion and citizenship are also mediated.

Most Kargilis did not view the Hill Council as a mode of social and political control; instead, the primary sentiment was that of hope and aspiration for a future

of rapid and inclusive development. Indeed, as the case of Brogpas illustrates, the Hill Council instilled in Kargil's several religious and ethnic minorities the desire to participate meaningfully in decentralized governance and democracy. For Brogpas, whose "distinct" cultural and religious practices had placed them on the peripheries of Ladakh's social and political order, the Council promised social justice, equitable development, and political inclusion. Racial, religious, and cultural stereotypes that had marked them as Ladakh's quintessential others provided compelling grounds to demand an exclusive seat in the Council.

However, Brogpa aspirations for political inclusion and participation in the Council were thwarted by their miniscule numbers as well as by the intense religious, regional, and ethnic discord that the Hill Council engendered. Despite its claims to promote an apolitical Council, devoid of party and partisan interests, the Hill Council in Kargil, much like its counterpart in Leh (van Beek 2001), relied on preexisting models of procedural democracy that operated predominantly through representational politics, voting blocs, and electoral constituencies. Constrained by the unfolding party and representational politics, the Hill Council was unable to extend opportunities for inclusive and participatory development to Brogpas or to other minority communities in Kargil. Despite their intense and prolonged struggle in which they deployed discourses of cultural rights as well as foregrounded their political loyalty to district Kargil, Brogpas ultimately failed to secure a Council seat; however, their struggles heightened Brogpa sense of racial and cultural difference along with reaffirming their place on the fringes of Kargil's political order.

Not only did the Hill Council fail to accommodate Brogpas into Kargil's political and economic mainstream, but it also failed to offer Brogpas a meaningful vision of inclusion and citizenship. While their culture, race, and religion had excluded Brogpas from Kargil's social and political order, their labor as porters, recruits, farmers, and spies profoundly reinforced their allegiance to the military, at once subordinating them to the prerogatives of defense and security and providing them an inclusive sense of national community. Brogpas were no longer just "*chandangs*" or "ignorant" and "primitive," stereotypes that were widely deployed in Ladakh to chastise them for their "difference." In the post-war period, Brogpas took on several military-oriented jobs—as first informers, recruits, porters, and spies—jobs that were critical to sustain the national territorial order but also important for the refashioning of their collective identities. The Hill Council did not directly enforce or encourage intense forms of militarization; instead, it was the Hill Council's inability to correct or ameliorate years of ethnic, regional, and party politics that strengthened Brogpa reliance on the military, not just for employment or livelihood but also to gain a sense of inclusion and citizenship. Brogpas aligned with the national body politic through discourses of heroism and loyalty, sentiments that reinforced the military's power over Brogpa lives, shaping their individual aspirations as well as their sense of community and collective identities. Their reciprocal yet asymmetric relationship with the military, however, also engendered a culture of fear and mistrust, compelling Brogpas to repeatedly assert their national loyalties and track potential signs of treason or disloyalty.

Operation Sadhbhavna further normalized the military's extensive presence in Brogpa villages in the post-war period. In less than a year, military-run goodwill schools, hospitals, and women's empowerment and vocational training centers became common sights in several Brogpa villages, establishing not only the military's renewed stakes in local development and democracy but also its widespread presence in hitherto unmanned areas. It was clear, however, that no amount of care or compassion could temper the violent excesses of a military that remained firmly committed to defense, security, and counterinsurgency warfare in India's border states. Sadhbhavna hardly altered the military's traditional pursuits of border security and surveillance. For instance, celebrating the various successes of Operation Sadhbhavna, several military scholars clearly outlined what the operation had achieved: "The most important benefit to the army," they claimed, was "the increased intelligence gathering by the local people."⁸

In her study of Guatemala, Hatcher (2005) shows how model villages set up by the military for "security qua development purposes" forced villagers to "[internalize] a feeling of control" (Schirmer 1998, quoted in Hatcher 2005: 34). The villagers, she argues, "tried to forget or repress whatever thought could be interpreted as subversive or disloyal by an army that was constantly scrutinizing their lives" (Flores 2001, quoted in Hatcher 2005: 34). The military's constant presence in Brogpa villages and the selective recruitment of Brogpas as spies furthered precisely the kind of mistrust and surveillance that Hatcher documents for Guatemala. Brogpas internalized militarized norms of identity and citizenship that were narrowly founded on tropes of loyalty, surveillance, and military service. Since Operation Sadhbhavna was built on and fostered perceptions of Muslim disloyalty and treason in Ladakh, Brogpas became increasingly wary of their liminal religious identities and downplayed their syncretic religious past that could be read as "unpatriotic" or "subversive."

Although the military's powers were deeply contested, the military continued to exercise considerable influence over Brogpa lives and their aspirations to become citizens and members of the body politic. Several Councillors and civil officers privately acknowledged that the military's sweeping presence in civilian areas and its control over prized land and resources had weakened the region's substantive growth and development. Yet the expanding role of the military in civilian lives was hardly ever challenged. Indeed, most state representatives, bureaucrats, and politicians failed to question the military's role either as guarantors of local livelihoods or as self-proclaimed harbingers of peace, healing, and humanitarianism. The military, as I was told repeatedly, "ruled the borders; their authority could hardly be questioned or disputed." For many civil officers and Councillors, working as agents of democracy entailed working within the confines of an expanding militarism in a context where the military had far greater access to local resources as well as to people's "hearts and minds." For Brogpas, however, to live on the margins of India's social and political orders was to bear the disproportionate burdens of national security and sacrifice for the illusory promise of healing, development, and inclusion.

A state of exception in the context of Kargil manifested itself as a hyper-militarized political order where democracy, development, and citizenship were not altogether suspended but became subservient to the exigencies of security and counterinsurgency. Democracy was permanently on the “threshold of indeterminacy,” veering between its impulse to grant fuller citizenship to border citizens and its compulsion to limit their rights and freedom or appropriate their resources in the name of defense and national security (Agamben 2005: 3). Institutions of democracy and development were extensions of a national security state while care, healing, and compassion became registers of rule and political containment.

An overwhelming emphasis on humanitarian discourses of healing and compassion signals a significant discursive break from earlier state narratives that remained solidly rooted in obsessive claims over Kashmiri territory or portrayed border regions as political theaters of wars and conflict, devoid of human populations and forms of social and community life. In a deeply fraught context, where violence has for long been—and continues to be—the most consistent tool deployed by the state to discipline populations and enforce conformity, the effort to “humanize” the Kashmir crisis seems refreshing, even emancipatory. Yet, much of this approach, I argue, remains perfunctory and uses humanism as a “new technology of [political] containment” (Marcus 2010: 368). The language of hearts, compassion, and democracy had not altered the excessive powers of the military or lessened its capacity to enforce regimes of rule and consent. A truly humanitarian approach towards Kashmir must strive for a future in which borders become irrelevant and freedom and democracy are no longer constrained by fear of subversion or threatened by political imaginaries that challenge state-scripted templates of identity and territory.

Notes

Introduction

- 1 A hybrid between a cow and a goat.
- 2 See <http://kashmirreporter.blogspot.com/2009/08/why-there-shouldnt-be.html> (accessed 12 December 2009).
- 3 India and Pakistan continue to engage in limited firefights that kill people or destroy their cattle and houses. The most recent skirmish was reported on January 6, 2013, in the Poonch sector of J&K state. See <http://www.hindustantimes.com/India-news/NewDelhi/Provoked--A-look-at-the-Indo-Pak-relationship/Article1-988861.aspx> (accessed January 15, 2013).
- 4 See Navnita Chadha Behera, "Kashmir: A Roadmap to Peace?," 2 June, 2003. See also Sumit Ganguly (2003).
- 5 See Brian Cox, "Reconciliation Training for Kashmiri Pundits and Muslims," International Center for Religion and Diplomacy, available at: <http://icrd.org/rp13>. The language of emotional, spiritual, and moral wounds became particularly salient as faith-based reconciliation groups began to operate in Kashmir for inter-community reconciliation and conflict resolution.
- 6 See http://www.manushi-india.org/pdfs_issues/PDF%20Files%20150/MK%20Article.13-23.pdf (accessed January 12, 2010).
- 7 As opposed to "terror warfare" in which the "fear of brutality" is used to control populations. See Nordstrom (1998).
- 8 See <http://www.indiastrategy.com/aug99dip.htm> (accessed March 14, 2008).
- 9 For a detailed discussion of Ladakh's construction as a border and a thorough overview of the existing literature on the anthropology of borders, see Ravina Aggarwal (2004: 16–20).
- 10 On questions of borders and sovereignty, see van Schendel (2005: 4), Aggarwal (2004: 1), and Bouzas (2012: 871).
- 11 Although the BJP remained firmly committed to its militant stance against Kashmir, Atal Bihari Vajpayee was credited with resuming talks with President Musharraf of Pakistan after the Kargil conflict and making concerted attempts to resume dialogue with Pakistan. However, many other BJP leaders like L.K. Advani continued to favor a military resolution to the Kashmir crisis (*ICG Asia Report*, December 4, 2003: 10, 11). Also see: <http://htsyndication.com/htsportal/article?arid=%22406981%22&pub=%22Early+Times%22> (accessed November 12, 2012).
- 12 In the post-Kargil war period, the BJP-led NDA government came to power and lasted an entire term. Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the prime minister of the coalition government.
- 13 I thank Ravina Aggarwal for this phrase.
- 14 To view states less as autonomous, discrete, and unitary (Evans et al., 1985; Krasner 1984; Nordlinger 1987) and more as fragmented and contested, see Gupta (2001); Mitchell (1999); Sharma and Gupta (2006); Sivaramakrishnan (1999, 2000).

- 15 For more on humanity as an invention of modernity, see Douzinas (2007).
- 16 For an institutionalized definition of humanitarianism, see Bornstein and Redfield (2011: 6). I find Fassin's expansive idea of the "humanitarian government" more useful in my work because it does not restrict the meanings of humanitarianism to "aid interventions in the Third World" (2012: 2).
- 17 The more popular terminology in the fields of political science and International Relations for "human"-centered state policies is "soft power," a term first coined by Joseph Nye in the post-Cold War period. Usha Purushothaman (2010) defines soft power as the state's ability to "attract rather than coerce" based on the "country's culture, political ideals, and policies."
- 18 For an excellent discussion of the historical emergence of the category of a Kashmiri "refugee" through "diverse relief and humanitarian projects," see Robinson (2012: 350).
- 19 For US military humanitarianism in Pakistan, see Ali (2010); for Pakistani's military's humanitarian interventions, see Shah (2011).
- 20 See Muehlebach (2011: 61).
- 21 Ravina Aggarwal and I argued how the Indian military reinvented itself through discourses of development and human rights to present itself as a democratic force even as it solidified its control over people's labor and loyalties (2009: 13). In this book, I build on and extend this argument further, showing how the military did not just claim labor and loyalties but also inflected notions of being, belonging, and citizenship. More importantly, contrary to claims that view India as a "failed state" or celebrate its vibrant democracy, I argue that the militarism and the violence it engenders are not exceptional but are an "integral part" of India's democratic culture (see also Roldan 2010: 63).
- 22 It is critical to bear in mind that for Ophir, that the "two state formations are not dialectical and that the difference between the two genealogies should be maintained for theoretical and political reasons alike" (2007: 118). He does not believe that the "fusion of relief and disaster" is "the dialectic result of one totalizing process of modernization that has perfected man's capacity not only to create his own historical conditions but also to tear the world apart and, at one and the same time, to mend it" (ibid: 121). So, regardless of how integrated these two formations appear, they need to be understood as "incompatible models" of governance (2007: 123).
- 23 Many Kargilis have demanded the opening up of the Kargil-Skardu road, which used to be the central route for inter-regional trade before India's partition in 1947 and the creation of the Line of Control (LoC) in 1948. Compared to the Zojila route, the Kargil-Skardu road can be an all-weather route that will allow divided families to reunite and end Kargil's winter isolation (see Zainab 2012).
- 24 Despite its potential to escalate into a nuclear holocaust, especially in the context of Pakistan's reluctance to adhere to the "no first use" agreement, what most confounded the Indian military and political strategists were the intricate details of the war. They attempted to figure out the extent to which the "intruders" or "infiltrators" were backed by the military dictator of Pakistan, General Musharraf. The General, however, denied any culpability (at least initially), claiming that the intrusion was spearheaded by "Pakistani freedom fighters" who were driven by the sole motive of liberating Kashmir from India (Swami 2006). Thus, whether the intruders were hired Pakistani mercenaries, professional soldiers, or local militants from the J&K state was unclear, although this was a critical piece of information within the context of an ongoing insurgency against the Indian state in Kashmir.
- 25 See <http://www.indianexpress.com/oldStory/22244/> (accessed April 12, 2006).
- 26 See <http://www.indiatogether.org/manushi/other/kashmir.htm> (accessed November 12, 2009).
- 27 See <http://www.indiatogether.org/manushi/other/kashmir.htm> (accessed March 12, 2009).
- 28 See http://www.accessmylibrary.com/coms2/summary_0286-22119400_ITM (accessed October 14, 2007).

- 29 See http://planningcommission.nic.in/reports/genrep/pl_vsn2020.pdf.
- 30 See http://classic.kanglaonline.com/index.php?template=kshow&kid=848&Idoc_Session=1b22ddd2873ef8925aed15a52b69a133 (accessed December 17, 2009).
- 31 A reinvention of counterinsurgency as a “humane” endeavor arose from wider post-Cold War trends in which militaries have actively taken on unprecedented peacekeeping and humanitarian roles, most notably through R2P (Responsibility to Protect) initiatives. Instead of being motivated solely by the desire to “protect” or maintain peace, however, the military’s “humanitarian” initiatives have, in many instances, become easy justifications for “US-sponsored regime changes,” Taylor reminds us (2005: 158). We must, he cautions, carefully track the ways in which “peace-building” or social reconstruction initiatives can “become the hearts and mind component of superpower counterinsurgencies” (ibid.).
- 32 For an extensive discussion of the differences between development and humanitarianism, see Fassin and Vasquez (2005: 394, 395). Although useful to think of development as a “long-term approach” compared to humanitarianism, which is often a response to an “emergency” meant to “save lives,” such rigid distinctions break down in any case since the Kargil war was considered a “crisis” situation for which the state’s and military’s “moral sentiments” had to be mobilized to effect a change of hearts. Development, I argue, became the most tangible expression of a “humanitarian government” in post-war Kargil (Fassin 2012).
- 33 See van Beek (1999). Van Beek discusses the “broader structural problems” that are inherent in models of autonomy that privilege identity and difference as registers of rights and entitlements (ibid.: 435).
- 34 Wars, Hardt and Negri caution us, have “always been incompatible with democracy” (2004: xi). The “possibility of democracy,” they argue, is “obscured and threatened by the seemingly permanent state of conflict across the world,” a state that has normalized the scaling back of freedom, rights, and civil liberties (ibid.).
- 35 For a history of Inner Lines, see Aggarwal (2004: 57, 58).
- 36 For a detailed analysis of HTS, see Gusterson (2010), Fawcett (2009), and González (2008).

1 Becoming Brogpa

- 1 For the long-term implications of the 1948 war on Gilgit-Baltistan, see Bouzas (2012).
- 2 For a detailed political history of Ladakh, see Aggarwal (2004), Kaul and Kaul (1992), Alexander Cunningham ([1854] 1998), and Petech (1977).
- 3 The ceasefire line was called the Line of Control during the Shimla Accord of 1972 between Indira Gandhi, the prime minister of India, and the president of Pakistan, Zulfikar Bhutto. To the political opposition in Pakistan, Bhutto’s acceptance of the new designation LoC indicated his failure to oppose the continued “status quo” on Kashmir, in part, a result of India’s triumph in the 1971 war and Pakistan’s vulnerable status during the negotiations. For Bhutto, however, the ceasefire line and the LoC were “interchangeable terms” (Schofield 2003: 118).
- 4 Based on her travel accounts and interviews, Alice Albinia (2008) claims that people from Baltistan continued to move across the LoC until 1971 with their herds. It was only after the Pakistani army occupied Baltistan in 1971 that such movements ceased completely.
- 5 Rohit Vohra claims that Brogpas trace their settlement in Ladakh to about 800–1000 years ago (1989a: 22), although Kaul argues that these migrations took place in the fifteenth century when “Islam replaced Buddhism in their homeland” (Kaul 1998: 48).
- 6 In the late nineteenth century, Frederick Drew noted that whenever the Dards encountered Baltis or Bhots, they were referred to as Brokpa or Blokpa. According to him, since the Dards came into contact with the Baltis as they traveled through mountain

passes and settled in hitherto unoccupied higher reaches, the appellation Brogpa became common (1875: 176).

- 7 After Garkone was opened to tourism in 2009, many young Brogpas have begun identifying themselves as “Aryan,” both to resist the dominant stereotypes about their “backwardness” and to boost tourist interest in their race and culture.
- 8 Furthermore, the term Dard has a deeply contested historicity and etymology, which further complicates the ways in which scholars understand Brogpa origin and settlements in Ladakh. Many claim that the earliest settlers in Ladakh belonged to an Indo-Aryan Dard group even though the term Dard or Indo-Aryan became popular in the nineteenth century, a time when the British finally discovered the territories in the Northwestern Himalayas and classified its populations according to their racial and linguistic attributes. For many others, however, the term Dard existed prior to the British; it referred to the “Daroda country” of Hindu mythology, a country that was later designated Dardistan by the British (for a detailed review, see Clarke 1977). Rohit Vohra, a cultural anthropologist who worked among Brogpas in the 1970s, acknowledges that despite such mythological connections, there is “no overwhelming evidence to connect the Daradas of antiquity” with groups who now identify as “Dards” (Vohra 1989a: 10). Despite its ideologically fraught context, the theory about their ancient “Dardic” lineage is an inextricable aspect of contemporary Brogpa identities.
- 9 Although hard to reconstruct this phase of Ladakhi history in its entirety, it is clear from Vohra’s account that by the sixteenth century, Brogpas, who still controlled some territories in Ladakh, had begun organizing against Ladakhi kings by forging political alliances with the king of Baltistan (Vohra 1989a, 1989b). With the support of Baltistan, Brogpas were able to foil Ladakhi attempts to invade areas beyond Khamtsi, a village east of Garkone. However, in the sixteenth century after Ali Sher Khan of Skardu, Baltistan, defeated Jam-dbyan-rnam-rgyal of Ladakh, Brogpas opted to remain under the Ladakhi king, for reasons that are not entirely clear. Stories of their valor and bravado from this time period are quite common and form significant aspects of Brogpa histories, legends, and folklores. One such instance of Brogpa bravery is when their famous chiefs, Gilsinghe, Galo, Gasho, and Gapo killed a ferocious *stak* (tiger) in order to appease Ali Sher Khan, the king of Skardu, Baltistan, who was riled by their decision to declare their allegiance to Jam-dbyan-rnam-rgyal, the king of Ladakh.
- 10 To this day, Brogpas from the villages of Dha, Dartsigs, and Garkone believe that Hanupas renounced their “Brogpa” identity the day they accepted the king’s seemingly gracious yet stern condition.
- 11 See http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2006-03-13/india/27790556_1_wife-swapping-ladakhis-hindu-scriptures (accessed November 12, 2007).
- 12 See <http://www.pizzocaro.com/story/?sid=37> (accessed April 24, 2009).
- 13 In most parts of Ladakh, only one crop is grown annually.
- 14 See <http://www.pizzocaro.com/story/?sid=37> (accessed April 24, 2009).
- 15 For a detailed genealogical account of Brogpa households and their marriage patterns in the 1980s, see Vohra (1989a: 76–136).
- 16 All older Ladakhis did not homogeneously share such perceptions about polyandrous marriages. See Aggarwal (2004: 72). I had limited access to polyandrous couples since there were only one or two in the village of Garkone at the time of my fieldwork.
- 17 Kanal is a unit of area used in parts of the Indian subcontinent. One kanal is equal to 1/8th of an acre, while a smaller unit of area called marla is 1/20th of a kanal or 1/160th of an acre.
- 18 Kim Gutschow documents the rising number of informal marriages in the sub-district of Zangskar. The bride is “stolen” rather than “arranged” to be given away to the groom’s family, a shift that has opened up spaces for women to challenge existing norms on marriage. Inter-religious marriages, however, are considered “disastrous if not dangerous” (2006: 484).

- 19 Sometimes, the logistics of elopement were difficult to negotiate. Once, a young Brogpa man from Gurgurdho was interested in eloping with a girl from Garkone. He wanted me to drive the couple to Batalik from where he planned to hire a taxi for Kargil since the bus service in the winters was erratic and there were no rental taxis in Garkone. I declined, and he left reluctantly. The next time I saw him, the couple had dropped the idea of eloping.
- 20 Indo-Tibetan Border Force, Indo-Tibetan Border Police, and Sashastra Seema Bal or the Armed Border Force.
- 21 Brogpas, like other Ladakhis, have a customary system of age grading that involves celebrating a festival (*lhogsar*) for each individual (both men and women) after he or she completes 12 years of his/her life. Thus for an individual, *lhogsar* was celebrated at the ages of 12, 24, 36, 48, and so on. I used village age-set categories as the basis of my census sampling.
- 22 Older parents usually set up their independent households after dividing their land among their sons. Mostly, these households were exempt from contributing toward communal village affairs.
- 23 With its headquarters in Leh, the Ladakh Buddhist Association is a religious and political organization with heavy stakes in Ladakh's religious and regional politics.
- 24 See Gutschow (2004) for an extensive ethnographic account of Buddhist nuns in Ladakh.
- 25 This statistic paralleled trends in other parts of Ladakh where one of the consequences of militarization was the unprecedented dropout rate of young boys from high schools. *Ladakh Melong*, a popular local magazine, concerned about this emerging trend attributed it to intense militarization in Ladakh (*Ladakh Melong* 2005).
- 26 Brogpas were reluctant to haul supplies for the military in the extreme cold; therefore, the military had begun employing Nepali workers who worked willingly for minimal pay.
- 27 *Pha-spun* are social groups comprising of several households who are tied more through "residence rather than descent" (Vohra 1989a: 153) and help one another in "life crisis rituals" (Srinivas 1998: 270).
- 28 With the exception of the Bishupas who lived in the widest part of the village and owned a total of 60 *kanals* of land.
- 29 There were families in Garkone with very few landholdings or none at all, mostly because their parents or grandparents had migrated to Garkone from other villages to escape droughts and other extremities of weather. They mostly worked as sharecroppers for richer families or had managed to secure meager landholdings over the years.
- 30 LUTE, a consortium of political parties, was constituted in 2002 in order to develop a stronger political front for a UT status for Ladakh.
- 31 Ravina Aggarwal (2004: 53) describes a similar situation for the Shi'a Muslims of Kargil who felt "sandwiched" between Leh and Kashmir while Kim Gutschow (2004: 31) does the same for the populations in Zangskar. For a similar situation across the border in Gilgit-Baltistan, see Bouzas (2012: 872).
- 32 See van Beek (1997).
- 33 By 2003, a newer trend had emerged among Brogpas as far as their preference for schools and education was concerned. Brogpas increasingly preferred to send their children to Leh instead of sending them to Kargil (Kargil was the more common preference in earlier generations). Such changes were not spontaneous; instead, they reflected the growing anxieties between Buddhists and Muslims that profoundly shaped Brogpa decisions to send their children to schools in Leh. Brogpas also feared that their girls would marry Muslim men and convert to Islam if they went to schools in Kargil. Stories of Brogpa women being lured by Muslim men were common in the village, a fear actively cultivated by the LBA to align Brogpas with Buddhists and discourage Brogpas from sending their girls to Kargil. Many parents sent their children to Leh because it was "far more developed" and offered "better infrastructure, teachers,

- and academic curricula.” Additionally, since Leh, unlike Kargil, had witnessed a mushrooming of foreign-funded NGOs and the influx of tourists who were sometimes willing to sponsor a child’s education, many Brogpas hoped to find international sponsors for their children in Leh. Moreover, private schools—mostly those that catered to Tibetan refugee children—were fancier and offered training in English and *Bodhi*, factors that made them far more popular in comparison to the schools in Kargil.
- 34 The administration allotted 12 *kanals* of land to relocated Muslim families, and only five *kanals* to Brogpas along the new *kul*, although it is clear that Brogpas (at the time) did not perceive the resettlement of Muslims as a deliberate move to disenfranchise them.
 - 35 *Purigs* are an ethnic group within Muslims in Kargil. They differentiate themselves from Balti Muslims who claim cultural and linguistic ties with Baltistan Muslims.
 - 36 See <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/the-batalik-battle/624617> (accessed July 25, 2010).
 - 37 Marital alliances between Buddhists and Muslims were very common in Ladakh before the turn to “communalism” in the 1980s. For an extensive analysis of the policing of marriage and body in Ladakh, see Smith (2009, 2011, 2012).
 - 38 For a detailed discussion of the Public Distribution System in Ladakh and its social and ecological effects, see Damee and Nüsser (2011).
 - 39 *Khral* was one of the ways labor was organized and delegated by Ladakhi kings who sent their subjects on specific missions to remote villages where they set up long-term residence.
 - 40 Villagers often compared me to Chamba and Lamchok, two *Sapas* Brogpas, who, despite being born in Garkone, could not speak the language well.
 - 41 Wynne Maggi (2001), in her work on the Kalashas, a community from the Northwestern Frontier Province of Pakistan that shares many cultural and linguistic similarities with Brogpas, argues that “the geography of the [pure] and [impure among the Kalasha] is far more complex [and dynamic] than the altitude hypothesis [predicts].” The altitude hypothesis, Maggi rightly argues, does not take into account how everyday social action can alter seemingly static realms of the pure and the impure, making the lived landscapes inherently fluid and dynamic.
 - 42 Brogpas abstained from such products in their old homes where the *sabdak* or the house deity lived.
 - 43 For a detailed discussion of local religious cosmologies, see Mills (2003).
 - 44 For details, see Kalki (2012).
 - 45 Thapar points out how “Max Muller depicted Aryan society as an idyllic society of village communities where people were concerned not with the mundane things of everyday living but with other-worldly thoughts and values” (1978: 201).
 - 46 Chetan Bhatt argues that in colonial India, Aryanism did not always correspond with its meanings in nineteenth-century Europe or in the post-Holocaust West. Aryanism in colonial India must be interpreted as a “distinctive pedagogical field” not completely reducible to European Aryanism (2001: 14). Earlier versions of Aryanism in India were associated more with “virtuousness and nobility” rather than with race even though “ideas of virtue, knowledge, and nobility” were firmly rooted in discourses of geographic exclusivity and xenophobia (Bhatt 2001: 16).
 - 47 Dards were first mentioned by Izzat-ul-lah, the assistant to Moorcroft, a veterinary surgeon of the East India Company. Izzat-ul-lah, on the directions of Moorcroft, was conducting explorations for his future journey into the area. It was Izzat-ul-lah who for the first time identified Dardis as an independent mountain tribe, slave traders and speakers of Pashtu and Daradi languages (Clarke 1977: 329).
 - 48 See <http://www.mockandoneil.com/dard.htm> (accessed February 26, 2005).
 - 49 See <http://www.mockandoneil.com/dard.htm>.
 - 50 See <http://www.mockandoneil.com/dard.htm>.
 - 51 See Golden (1984).

- 52 See <http://www.4vf.net/environment-asias-lost-tribe-of-aryans/> (accessed March 5, 2006).
- 53 *The Achtung Baby*, 2007. Director: Sanjeev Sivan.
- 54 This is not to argue or claim that Brogpa villages would have voted unanimously for the same candidates as a unified voting bloc. However, there is certainly a strong perception among Brogpas and local political leaders that the division of Brogpa villages undoubtedly affected their ability to rally for their demands. Indeed, there were talks of pushing the government to redraw the boundaries so that Brogpa villages would fall into the same district. But no concerted attempt was made in this direction and not all villagers were keen to switch districts.
- 55 See <http://www.asianwindow.com/tag/himalayas/> (accessed November 21, 2012).

2 The Hill Council and the healing touch

- 1 See <http://www.tribuneindia.com/2003/20030110/j&k.htm#1> (accessed June 20, 2006). In addition to convincing Kargilis to form a Hill Council, Mufti's healing touch policy was also designed to empower the already constituted Hill Council and extend its powers. In doing so, Mufti intended to go against the heavy-handedness of the Farooq Abdullah government and its consistent interference with the Hill Council in Leh.
- 2 See <http://www.tribuneindia.com/2003/20030110/j&k.htm#1>.
- 3 Kenneth MacDonald uses the term to denote the ways in which oppositional movements in Baltistan are "appropriating and reproducing stereotypic representations of Tibetanness" in order to construct an "authentic" and exclusive regional identity vis-à-vis Pakistan (2006: 192).
- 4 The Rashtrya Sevak Sangh (RSS) and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) both demanded the trifurcation of the state to "resolve the vexed Kashmir issue," demanding separate statehood for Jammu and Kashmir and a Union Territory status for Ladakh. The VHP even supported the demands of a separate homeland for Kashmiri Pandits. See <http://www.rediff.com/news/2002/jun/30rss1.htm> (accessed January 12 2006). Also see van Beek (2004).
- 5 It is important to note that Ladakh used similar discourses of regional and cultural uniqueness and distinction to seek autonomy from Kashmir. For details, see Martijn van Beek (1999, 2001, 2004).
- 6 See http://archive.org/stream/excludedareas035320mbp/excludedareas035320mbp_djvu.txt (accessed February 15, 2007).
- 7 The creation of autonomous tribal Councils in the initial phases of India's independence led to a vigorous debate between the "assimilationists" and the "Nehruvian liberals or the integrationists," each of whom had an alternative version of how national unity in India could be fostered (Sonntag 1999: 421). However, because of the preponderance of Nehruvian liberals in the constituent assembly, Councils for self-government were instituted in the Northeastern state of Assam, granting the "tribals" a certain degree of autonomy in their political affairs (ibid.: 421).
- 8 In the 1980s, Amendment 244 was introduced in the Constitution that allowed the establishment of an autonomous Council in the only non-frontier region of Darjeeling in the eastern state of West Bengal. For details, see Sonntag (1999).
- 9 See Tharakan (2007).
- 10 For details, see van Beek (1998a, 1998b, 1999, 2000a, 2001).
- 11 Several scholars claim that the social boycott was not directed only toward Muslims. Several other minority groups were also targets of the boycott (see van Beek 1998a; Fewkes 2009: 152).
- 12 See <http://indianmuslims.in/buddhist-muslim-relations-in-ladakh-part-2/> (accessed December 5, 2011).
- 13 See also Aggarwal (2004: 53, 54).

- 14 Unlike the National Conference, the PDP was considered less hostile to autonomous forms of governance in the state such as Hill Councils. As soon as the PDP came to power, it increased budget allocations for the Council, gave ministerial status to the Councillors, and increased their salaries. In addition, several other amendments were introduced that redressed the long-term grievances of the Councillors in Leh against the state government. The iron fist of the state government under NC's Farooq Abdullah was believed to have compromised the ability of the Hill Council in Leh to effect any substantive social, economic, and political shifts (for an interesting analysis of this issue, see van Beek 2000, 2001; Aggarwal 2004: 48, 49). According to one newspaper report, as soon as Mufti's government came to power, Thupstan Tsewang was invited as a state guest to a dinner party. This was the first time that the Chief Executive Councillor (CEC) had been treated as a state guest. Farooq Abdullah had never even invited Thupstan to a tea party (Sant KumarSharma, *Times of India*, November 19, 2002).
- 15 See <http://www.milligazette.com/Archives/15072002/1507200231.htm> (accessed June 2, 2006).
- 16 According to many Kargili leaders, the demands for Great Ladakh were a political strategy to counter the UT demands of the Buddhist leadership. The intention was to ascertain that Kargilis too had a claim to the reterritorialization of Ladakh if and when Leh's demand for a UT was accepted. Indeed, the constitution of the Hill Council in 2003 only strengthened this demand.
- 17 For details, see van Beek (1999: 440).
- 18 There were no specific guidelines in the Act regarding the parameters for demarcating voting constituencies. In Leh, the government carved out constituencies on the basis of area and remoteness, but in Kargil, population was used as the primary criteria. According to political leaders in Leh, this was because Kargil was smaller and had better road connectivity than Leh. So the parameter of remoteness could not be justified for Kargil. The combined population of Buddhist Brogpas was approximately 1,200, less than what was required to form an electoral constituency.
- 19 In addition to thwarting Brogpa demands for a separate constituency (given their population of 1,200 people in Kargil district), constituency demarcations also led to disgruntlement among other Buddhist communities in Kargil. The delineation of constituencies was perceived to have taken place along communal lines by the Buddhists from the Shargol constituency. Three Muslim villages had been added to the Shargol constituency, which, according to Tashi Angchuk, General Secretary of the Buddhist Action Committee in Kargil, prevented the Buddhist candidate from the region from winning the elections (*The Himalayan Mail*, June 29, 2003). As a result, Buddhists from Shargol and Chigtan boycotted the elections. Their move, however, did not prevent elections from proceeding and Muslim candidates from these constituencies won the election. In contrast, the boycott in Zangskar that was initiated by Buddhists and Muslims together to demand an increase in the number of representatives from three to ten prevented the elections from taking place in Zangskar. Brogpas, on the contrary, participated in the elections and supported the unanimous declaration of Feroze Khan, a Muslim candidate from their constituency. Despite constant pleas from their Buddhist counterparts to boycott the elections, Brogpas refused to acquiesce to their demands, reiterating their unique political status that did not align with dominant Buddhist agendas.
- 20 Martijn van Beek also argues that communalism might not always be the dominant form of articulation for rights and demands in Ladakh (2000a: 545).
- 21 There were certainly contestations in Leh as well as over representations. For Brogpas of Dha in Leh district, however, Brogpas of Kargil were better placed to get a Council seat because they were officially recognized as "different." In Leh, however, the discourse of difference was muted in official circles. Brogpas were socially different, but when it came to political issues, they were identified as Buddhists. A number of Dha

- residents noted that even in their Scheduled Tribe (ST) certificates, they were identified as *Bot* (another ethnic group) and not *Brogpa*.
- 22 Although there were four nominated positions in the Council, the general consensus was that all four nominations could not be allotted to the Buddhists from Kargil. Since the Act outlined nominations for women as well, talks were underway to include two Muslim women in the Council. The third nominated seat would most likely go to Zangskar, a region in Kargil that was predominantly Buddhist. Therefore, Brogpas and Buddhists from Wakha and Mulbek competed for one nominated seat.
 - 23 For an interesting Gramscian analysis to understand how and why culture becomes a “primary site for political struggle,” see Kenneth Macdonald (2006: 200, 201). He documents the widespread use of “culture” for political mobilization in Baltistan.
 - 24 See <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/fr/1595208/posts> (accessed January 15, 2007).
 - 25 See Thapar (1999), available at: <http://ascjnu.tripod.com/aryan.html>. Thapar argues that Hindutva groups are particularly invested in proving that Aryans did not migrate but were indeed indigenous to India, a theory that enables them to legitimize the origins of Hinduism in India. See Thapar (2000) available at: <http://www.frontlineonnet.com/fl1720/17200150.htm>; see also Aggarwal (2004: 230).
 - 26 Such perceptions are changing fast as the RSS increases its presence in Ladakh and also among Brogpas.
 - 27 In liberal political thought, an understanding of rights and entitlements that transcends the individual as the only locus of rights is certainly new; for a long time, political philosophers considered individuals, rather than collectivities, to be the legitimate bearers of rights (Cowen et al. 2001), a perception that profoundly ignored patterns of collective disenfranchisement minority communities experienced due to their culture, language, or heritage (Dworkin 1977; Taylor 1994).
 - 28 Brogpas did not claim the indigenous label. Rather than signifying nativity thus, the label “indigenous” has increasingly come to represent marginal communities with little or no participation in the processes and institutions of the government (Wilson 1997:10, see also Dean and Levi 2003). Brogpa deployment of cultural rights, too, was rooted in their situated histories and collective sense of social, economic, and political disenfranchisement rather than in discourses of indigeneity and/or aboriginality. In fact, in India the official category of “scheduled tribe” (ST) most closely aligns with claims of disempowerment and disfranchisement that the term “indigenous” might signify in other contexts. Brogpas are one of the eight STs in Ladakh. Even the category ST has a complex and contested history in Ladakh. For an excellent analysis, see van Beek (1997).
 - 29 *Sapas* were Buddhists who had either migrated into Garkone from other villages during severe droughts or were sent by the Ladakhi kings in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. There were more than ten families who were identified as *sapas*. Despite their “outsider” status, *sapas* were well integrated into the village. The only difference was ritualistic. *Sapas* were not allowed near the *deiha* (their village god) and their bodies were cremated in a different spot, although these restrictions were also loosely enforced.
 - 30 There was another candidate who was supported by both the factions in Garkone. He was from Dartsigs village. However, Khyentse primarily blamed Norbu for giving away the seat to Dartsigspas. According to Norbu, Khyentse had instigated Muslims in Gurgurtho against Norbu by claiming that Norbu was trying to sell the seat to a Dartsigspa. Since Muslims of Gurgurtho have had several land disputes with Dartsigspas, the relationship between them was strained. Moreover, there was a general perception in Kargil that Brogpas from Dartsigs were more “Buddhist” than Brogpas of Garkone. Some cited the larger number of recruits in the village, while others attributed it to a greater influence of Leh on the local politics in Dartsigs. Although Dawa, the village *nambardar* of Dartsigs, was listed as a contender in both Norbu’s and Khyentse’s applications, Norbu and Khyentse remained the front runners for the nominated seat. However, after several

months of negotiations, another contender from Dartsigs village, who had a college degree, was also fielded as a candidate, given his better academic credentials.

- 31 Here, I specifically draw from scholars of postcolonial state formations who discuss “patronage” and “intimacy” as primary characteristics through which forms of governance, citizenship, and political representation are mediated (Chakrabarty 1984; Gupta 1995; Osella and Osella 2000; Sivaramakrishnan 1995).
- 32 Asgar Ali Karbalai and his supporters were able to overthrow Qamar Ali Akhooon’s leadership in 2004 in what has been termed as a “legislative coup” (Swami 2004). This was a direct result of the MP elections that weakened the NC stronghold in Kargil. Karbalai and his supporters had fielded Wazir Ali (an independent candidate) against Hassan Khan (the NC candidate). Since Kargil Muslims were deeply divided between these two candidates, it proved to be an overwhelming victory for the Congress candidate, Thupstan Tsewang. In a conversation with one of Karbalai’s supporters, I was told that: *Wazir Ali aisa teer hai jo Hassan Khan ke dil par jakar laga hai* [Wazir Ali’s candidature was an arrow that has pierced Hassan Khan’s heart]. Karbalai and his supporters deliberately chose Wazir Ali since both Hassan Khan and Wazir Ali were close friends. The end result of all these machinations was the overwhelming victory of Thupstan Tsewang in the MP elections. Subsequent to this, a number of Councillors who initially had supported the NC and hence Qamar Ali Akhooon as the CEC, switched their alliance to Karbalai. Eventually, the balance of votes within the Council tipped in Karbalai’s favor and he became the CEC.
- 33 Feroze Khan, the unanimously elected Councillor from Silmoo, had promised Brogpa a nominated seat in exchange for their support. However, the CEC Qamar Ali Akhooon was not interested in the nomination of a Brogpa candidate. Karbalai and his supporters, on the other hand, were championing their cause for several reasons. One reason was to garner Brogpa support for future elections. The other was to ensure that Brogpa “loyalty” to Kargil could be rewarded.
- 34 European Commission, Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid-ECHO.

3 *Pajlus*, porters, and heroes

- 1 *Pajlu* means a herder.
- 2 Many military scholars argue that insofar as its implications for questions of defense and national security are concerned, the Kargil war was hardly limited. One major impact of the Kargil war was that the Kargil Review Committee was set up for the first time in India so the limitations of India’s intelligence and defense infrastructure could be openly discussed (Bhonsle 2009). Thus, it is clear that even from a defense standpoint, the impacts of the Kargil war were wide-ranging. However, it is still called a “limited” war because it lasted only three months and did not extend beyond Kargil. Many Indian military officials believe that it was the “self imposed national strategy of restraint” that confined the “war to the Kargil-Siachen sector” (Malik 2009: 1).
- 3 For Jamwal’s report, see <http://www.mcrg.ac.in/mediareport2.htm> (accessed November 21, 2005).
- 4 For an excellent analysis of how the Kargil war shaped the school curriculum and gendered activities in Maharashtra, see Bénéï (2008).
- 5 For a fascinating and in-depth study of the development of the nuclear bomb in India, see Abraham (1998).
- 6 Ajay Bisaria argues that Clinton’s primary worry was that if the Kargil war was not stopped in time, it could prompt Pakistan to seek help from China and the Arab states while India might turn to Russia and Israel for help, alliances that could potentially destabilize the entire region (2009: 2).
- 7 Also see Aggarwal (2004).
- 8 Despite India’s “unequivocal” claims of victory in the Kargil conflict, military strategists, politicians, and Indians were enraged by the military’s gross intelligence failures

- because of which Pakistani intrusions into India went unnoticed until almost “1000 square kms of Indian territory” were occupied by Pakistani fighters. See Praveen Swami, see <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume2/Fault2-SwamiF.htm>.
- 9 Namgyal's story is quite popular and appeared in many newspaper and media accounts. See, for instance, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume2/Fault2-SwamiF.htm>; <http://www.frontlineonnet.com/fl1615/16150070.htm>; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c7Hzqos7ZN8>; http://www.partitionofindia.com/_archive/0000103f.htm; <http://www.expressindia.com/news/ie/daily/19991011/ige11079p.html>. Although reported widely in the media, I use the pseudonym Norboo in the book.
 - 10 Since Buddhist Brogpas do not eat yak meat, they claimed that their missing yaks was a clear indication of “Muslim” presence in the borders.
 - 11 See <http://www.expressindia.com/news/ie/daily/19991011/ige11079p.html>, accessed 20 March, 2008.
 - 12 See http://deletionpedia.dbatley.com/w/index.php?title=Tashi_Namgyal_%28Kargil%29_%28deleted_31_Aug_2008_at_20:46%29 (accessed June, 30 2009).
 - 13 For a detailed history, see Cunningham ([1854/] 1998) who defines *khral* as the chief source of revenue for Ladakhi kings and later for Dogra rulers who ruled Ladakh from the 1800s onwards. Nicky Grist (1994) discusses the institution of *begar* or obligatory portage and argues that it was integral to Ladakhi political economy in pre-Independence Ladakh. Also see Bray (2009).
 - 14 Ladakh Scouts was given the status of a full infantry regiment in 2000. Until 2002, academic criteria for enlistments were lenient when young Ladakhi men were needed in large numbers. However, in subsequent years, the army raised the academic bar, thus disappointing many young Brogpa aspirants who could no longer enlist.
 - 15 Praveen Swami writes that General Vij issued these orders after five civilian porters had died carrying food and ammunition for the army in district Bandipora of J&K. The civilian outrage that followed posed a threat to ongoing dialogues for reconciliation between Delhi and Kashmir's separatist organizations. However, Swami rightly points out that the porters or their families are not beneficiaries of any insurance claims if they die or are injured at work. And porters often die due to “avalanches and artillery exchanges” on the border (Swami 2004b).
 - 16 Valerie Kuletz (1998) uses the term “geography of sacrifice” to refer to Native American reservations in the Southwest inter-desert region of the United States where nuclear waste is stored in deep-geologic repositories.
 - 17 Kim Gutschow documents in extensive detail the ways in which several places in Ladakh were still under the control of Pakistani forces for almost six months after the ceasefire line partitioned Kashmir between India and Pakistan. Brogpa stories of plunder and loot by Pakistani forces are corroborated by Gutschow's ethnographic data from Zangskar (2006: 478).
 - 18 I attended at least three recruitment drives, two in the village of Dartsigs and one in Batalik. A series of recruitment rallies were held between 2001 and 2004 in the Batalik sector.
 - 19 Women also spoke of unrestrained or unregulated male sexualities outside the context of changing labor relations in the village. For instance, after the rape, women blamed “males” for transgressive acts but did not see them as necessarily new or non-normative. However, their increasing resentment was directed mostly towards younger men, who, compared to their older counterparts, were considered lazy and prone to alcoholism and gambling. Their increased association with Nepali workers, a number of whom lived in tents at the base of the village was another factor held responsible for making Brogpa men “unproductive.” Several men were also secretly derided for visiting a Nepali prostitute who pretended to be a “tea seller.”

- 20 For a detailed elaboration on women's roles and experiences in Indian borderlands, see Banerjee and Chaudhury (2011). See Ravina Aggarwal (2004) for the numerous ways in which feminine responsibility to nurture and strengthen national territory appears in Ladakhi films, epics, and everyday life (2004: 124–127).
- 21 The military often collaborated with the Field Research Laboratory (FRL) in Leh to sponsor training workshops for farmers under Operation Sadhbhavna. However, during my stay, no one from Garkone was invited to those workshops. FRL is an organization that specializes in agrotechnologies in addition to providing technological services to support defense requirements.
- 22 According to some Brogpas, the PDS system in Garkome started in the 1980s.
- 23 Disputes over the distribution of military favors were common in the village. For instance, in 2004, under Operation Sadhbhavna's policy to sponsor a select group of Brogpa children for primary and high-school education in army schools across India, Norboo prepared an exhaustive list of children. However, villagers in the opposite faction soon realized that the list was partisan and favored Norboo's allies and relatives. The soldier on duty was accosted by a group of villagers who threatened him and told him to leave immediately and never come back for the list unless he wanted a list of deserving children. The soldier was angry and visibly upset. He immediately countered the villagers by reminding them that the military was doing them a "favor" and if they didn't want it, he would not come back to the village.
- 24 Despite his initial reluctance to divulge details about the war, Murup became increasingly angry as his relations with his brother worsened. He approached me once and asked me to interview him when nobody else was around so he could vent his anger. When I spoke to him finally, Murup was visibly upset and shaking with anger and sadness. He cried uncontrollably over his troubled and estranged relationship with his brother.

4 Heart warfare?

- 1 Military organized medical camps were common during my fieldwork from 2000 to 2004. No such camps were organized in 2006, 2009, or 2011. Such camps were organized with great fanfare, mostly because senior military officials (not directly responsible for Sadhbhavna activities) were invariably invited to these events. In addition, other Sadhbhavna events were also organized in villages. These included picnics in which a senior military officer would make a short speech after which food and gifts were distributed among villagers. Villagers were also asked to participate in games such as kabaddi and the tug-of-war.
- 2 Puar and Rai explore how "the construction of the pathologized psyche of the terrorist-monster" enables certain practices of normalization which in today's context means a "hyperaggressive heterosexual patriotism" (2002: 117). They further explore how experts mobilize heteronormative discourses of sexuality to read the "psyche" of the terrorist as perverse and deviant. Just as "perversity and "deviance" allow experts to map and regulate terrorism, "alienation," I argue, is a framework deployed by the Indian military to predict, anticipate, and map the contours of incipient insurgency.
- 3 Population-centric counterinsurgency is "counter-posed to enemy-centric strategies in which violence is deployed to deter civilians from cooperating with insurgents" (Khalili 2011: 1472).
- 4 This is a pseudonym.
- 5 It was clear that the military intended to provide a "unified narrative" to the media as well as to researchers interested in Sadhbhavna (see Khalili 2010). It was hardly surprising that in several of my interviews with senior officials in Leh, Kargil, and Kashmir, I was often shown PowerPoint slides that relied on a pre-approved script to relay "neutral" facts and data.
- 6 Instances of domestic violence against women were rare but not absent. With younger married men away either on military service or for higher education, there was a lot of

speculation about their young wives having “affairs” with Nepalis or other village men. In this particular instance, the husband attended the college outside Ladakh and hardly lived in the village.

- 7 Leena Parmar, Kingston, Canada, at IUS conference, 25–27 October 2002, “Operation Sadbhavana: A Unique Peace Process in Kashmir.”
- 8 The framework of human security, as scholars contend, “achieved striking prominence in the post-Cold War period” and became integral to wide-ranging discussions on security among policy-makers, activists, practitioners, and academics (Duffield and Waddell 2006: 2). See Duffield and Waddell (2006).
- 9 Arpita Anant notes that while Operation Sadbhavna is not a counterinsurgency strategy in Ladakh, it is an integral “part of the Army’s counterinsurgency operations” in the provinces of Jammu and Kashmir (2011: 8). I disagree with her assessments based on my extensive conversations with numerous military officials who saw the Ladakhi phase of Operation Sadbhavna as part of the wider counterinsurgency operations in the state of Jammu and Kashmir.
- 10 See <http://justinwrites.wordpress.com/2011/01/03/how-petraeus-has-changed-the-afghanistan-war/>.
- 11 Despite the reemergence of the national security doctrine in the post-9/11 era, human security has widely been appropriated by militaries to partner with non-military actors in what are portrayed as purely humanitarian interventions, such as peace support operations and “responsibility to protect (RTP)” initiatives of the last decade.
- 12 See http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=45551 (accessed December 11, 2009).
- 13 See Pedden (2012) for a detailed analysis of how despite their irreconcilability, the laws of war and human rights are being merged for counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan.
- 14 See <http://afs.ahrchk.net/mainfile.php/article/5/>.
- 15 See file:///Users/depauwuniversity/Desktop/counterinsurgency/velvet%20gloves.webarchive (accessed May 11, 2009).
- 16 See Colonel Behram A. Sahukar, “The Indian Approach to Counterinsurgency Operations.” Operation Sadbhavna, much like Operation Samaritan, was conceptualized long before the *Doctrine of Sub-Conventional Operations* was formalized.
- 17 While India formalized its *Doctrine for Sub-Conventional Operations* (DSCO) in 2006, the US military released its *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* in 2007. David Fidler argues that although the documents were released almost simultaneously, there is nothing to suggest that Indian and US researchers shared “lessons, best practices, and doctrinal principles” (2009: 207). Dipankar Banerjee argues that the DSCO was the second doctrinal document. It came after the Indian Army Doctrine of 2004 (2009: 189).
- 18 Leena Parmar, Kingston, Canada, at IUS conference, 25–27 October 2002, “Operation Sadbhavana: A Unique Peace Process in Kashmir.”
- 19 The thinking among many defense scholars and specialists is that “in India, the degree of inaccessibility of an area, the strength of separate social identity of its population, and the amount of external unifying influence on it determine the propensity of that area for insurgency” (Mitra 2007: 20). Therefore, according to the military, even in the absence of an active insurgency in Ladakh, the “propensity” for anti-national activities was present.
- 20 See <http://www.indiatogether.org/peace/kashmir/articles/l0702.htm>.
- 21 Personal interview with Col. Sharma in which he explained Arjun Ray’s aim of creating a democratic army to align it with India’s political ethos.
- 22 See <http://archives.digitaltoday.in/indiatoday/20010611/nation4.html>. For an excellent account of psychological warfare and brainwashing, see Catherine Lutz (1997). She argues, among other things, that during the Cold War, psychological warfare was promoted as “both modern and humane” because of the US military’s incorporation

- of psychology, the “most human and cutting edge science” into tactics of warfare (ibid.: 159).
- 23 *Force Magazine*, May 2011, available at: <http://www.forceindia.net/Interviewmay2.aspx> (accessed December 7, 2011).
 - 24 See Saga of Goodwill. www.arabisto.com (accessed June 24, 2009).
 - 25 Leena Parmar, “Sadhbhavna: A Culture of Peace Process,” 2004.
 - 26 See <http://www.newindiadigest.com/army.htm> (accessed November 7, 2011).
 - 27 See <http://www.rediff.com/news/report/how-the-army-rescued-india-in-difficult-times/20110114.htm>, “How the Army Rescued India in Difficult Times,” *Rediff News*, January 14, 2011 (accessed July 24, 2011).
 - 28 “Now Heart Warfare,” *India Today*, June 11, 2001.
 - 29 Col. Sharma was also accused of accepting civilian charity money for Sadhbhavna that many argued was a breach of military conduct.
 - 30 This view might be changing because WHAM (Winning Hearts and Minds operations) is now considered an integral part of the Indian military’s counterinsurgency war. See *Doctrine of Sub-Conventional Operations*, 2006.
 - 31 The military’s counterinsurgency tactics are thoroughly medicalized. Let us consider briefly how General Petraeus, the most recent architect of American counterinsurgency doctrine describes such operations: “The focus of COIN operations generally progresses through three indistinct stages that can be envisioned with a medical analogy: Stop the bleeding, Inpatient care-recovery, outpatient care-movement to self-sufficiency” (Petraeus and Amos 2007: 5–2). In military parlance, the first stage entails “breaking the insurgents’ initiative and momentum” invariably through force, while the second stage usually involves “stability operations” that “focus on governance, provision of essential services, and stimulation of economic development” (ibid.: 5-2). Needless to say, the clinical jargon deployed in the doctrine does not nearly capture the brutality of counterinsurgency operations, especially in the first stage where the enemy must be excised through force. My point, however, is to illuminate how the medicalization of counterinsurgency reflects both an obvious effort to discredit insurgencies as abnormal and deviant (a point laboriously argued by many), as well as an attempt to recuperate social life through metaphors of healing and recovery.
 - 32 US Army Command and General Staff College, “Field Circular: Low Intensity Conflict,” Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, July 16, 1986.
 - 33 Martijn van Beek (1998a, 2001) argues how Buddhists in Ladakh have consistently deployed patriotism to strengthen their demands for a Union Territory status that would allegedly end Kashmir’s domination over Ladakh.
 - 34 Prem Shankar Jha, “Put Faith in Trust,” *Hindustan Times*, July 1, 2001.
 - 35 Although many soldiers claimed that they were not readily welcomed in Muslim villages before Sadhbhavna changed their opinions, many Kargilis I spoke to were not averse to Sadhbhavna. They applauded Arjun Ray for finally recognizing their worth and providing them better access to jobs and resources. Ladakhi Buddhists were the ones who complained that Sadhbhavna helped Muslims more than Buddhists. For details on this issue, see Aggarwal and Bhan (2009).
 - 36 Kargil Committee Report, “From Surprise to Reckoning,” Executive Summary, Friday, 25 February 2000, available at: <http://nuclearweaponarchive.org/India/KargilRCA.html#1>.
 - 37 Ibid.
 - 38 Ibid.
 - 39 In her ethnography on Ladakh, Ravina Aggarwal discusses the religious dissensions in the village of Achinathang, a village 10 miles from Garkone. Unlike Garkone, however, Achinathang has a mixed Muslim and Buddhist populations. Although their relationship was by no means ideal, Buddhists and Muslims in Achinathang continued to remain interdependent for social and economic reasons (Aggarwal 2004: 214). This was mostly true for Brogpas as well, given their affiliation to Kargil and their dependence

on neighboring Muslim villages. In Garkone, however, since every resident villager was a Buddhist, Brogpas were more vocal about their antagonisms against Muslims.

- 40 Similar rumors and anxieties also existed in the Gilgit-Baltistan area. See Bouzas (2012). Borders are “natural sites for spies and the spreading of rumors” (ibid.: 879).
- 41 See Goldstein (2004).

5 Blurred boundaries

- 1 Musical instruments used by Brogpas and Ladakhis during dances and festivals.
- 2 Schiff argues that the argument for keeping the military separate from the political sector is based on a limited American model of politics and does not take into account “cultural” contexts in other countries.
- 3 See <http://www.sandipanonline.com/tag/operation-sadbhavna/>.
- 4 See <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=308216582612555&set=a.308216539279226.54188.189419427825605&type=1&theater>.
- 5 Such perceptions have been questioned to some extent by events in which high-ranking military officers were charged of corruption or embezzlement. The Adarsh Housing Scam, accepting bribes for admission into the National Defense Academy, The Bofors deal etc. have been widely reported in the Indian media as instances of the extensive “rot” in the Indian Army. Yet the army continues to be associated with images of unyielding righteousness and morality. See <http://www.firstpost.com/india/corruption-in-armed-forces-how-extensive-is-the-rot-388808.html> (accessed January 10, 2013).
- 6 The Kargil war substantively changed the defense scenario in India. In 2000, the proposed federal budget announced a 20 percent increase in defense spending compared to the previous year. Many defense analysts claim that the Kargil war prompted the government to revisit extensive modernization plans that had been shelved for a long time. See Vivek Raghuvanshi, “India Devotes More Resources to Counter Pakistan,” *Defense News*, February 21, 2000.
- 7 See http://www.groundreport.com/Politics/JK-CM-said-we-will-revoke-PDP-s-AFSPA-during-our-t_2/2906562 (accessed January 15, 2010).
- 8 1 *kanal* is 0.125 acres.
- 9 On January 7, 2013, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah launched the first-ever civilian flight between Kargil and Jammu. The fare is considerably higher in this sector, therefore, air travel remains unaffordable for most Kargilis.
- 10 Not every village had designated names for their mountains, see Aggarwal (2004: 61).

6 Conclusion

- 1 For a similar analysis of the state of exception in Baltistan, see Bouzas (2012: 879).
- 2 Armed Forces Special Powers Act; Public Safety Act; Prevention of Terrorist Activity Act; Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Prevention Act. Also see Amnesty International (2011).
- 3 Amnesty International (2011).
- 4 See <http://www.indiatogether.org/manushi/issue113/kargil.htm>.
- 5 See <http://www.indiatogether.org/manushi/issue113/kargil.htm>.
- 6 Van Beek argues that historic tropes of marginality and backwardness are “not denied by Ladakhis.” They are deployed by the government to justify their interventions as well as used by Ladakhis to “demand” state interventions (2000b: 257)
- 7 See <http://www.delhipolicygroup.com/pdf/DPG-Seminarkashmirmeetingsummary.pdf>.
- 8 See <http://www.peacefulsocieties.org/NAR09/090430lada.html> (accessed November 28, 2010).

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